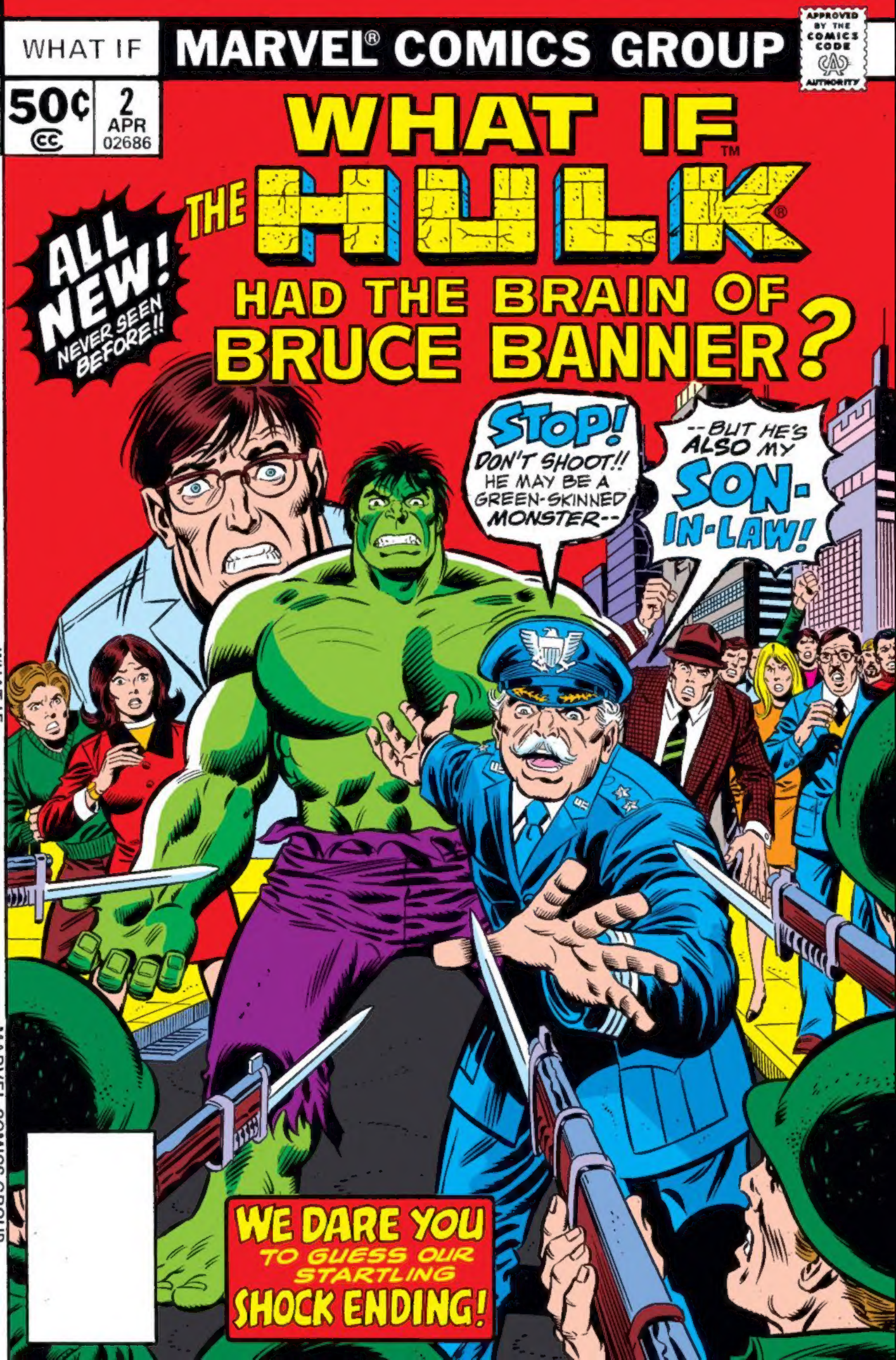
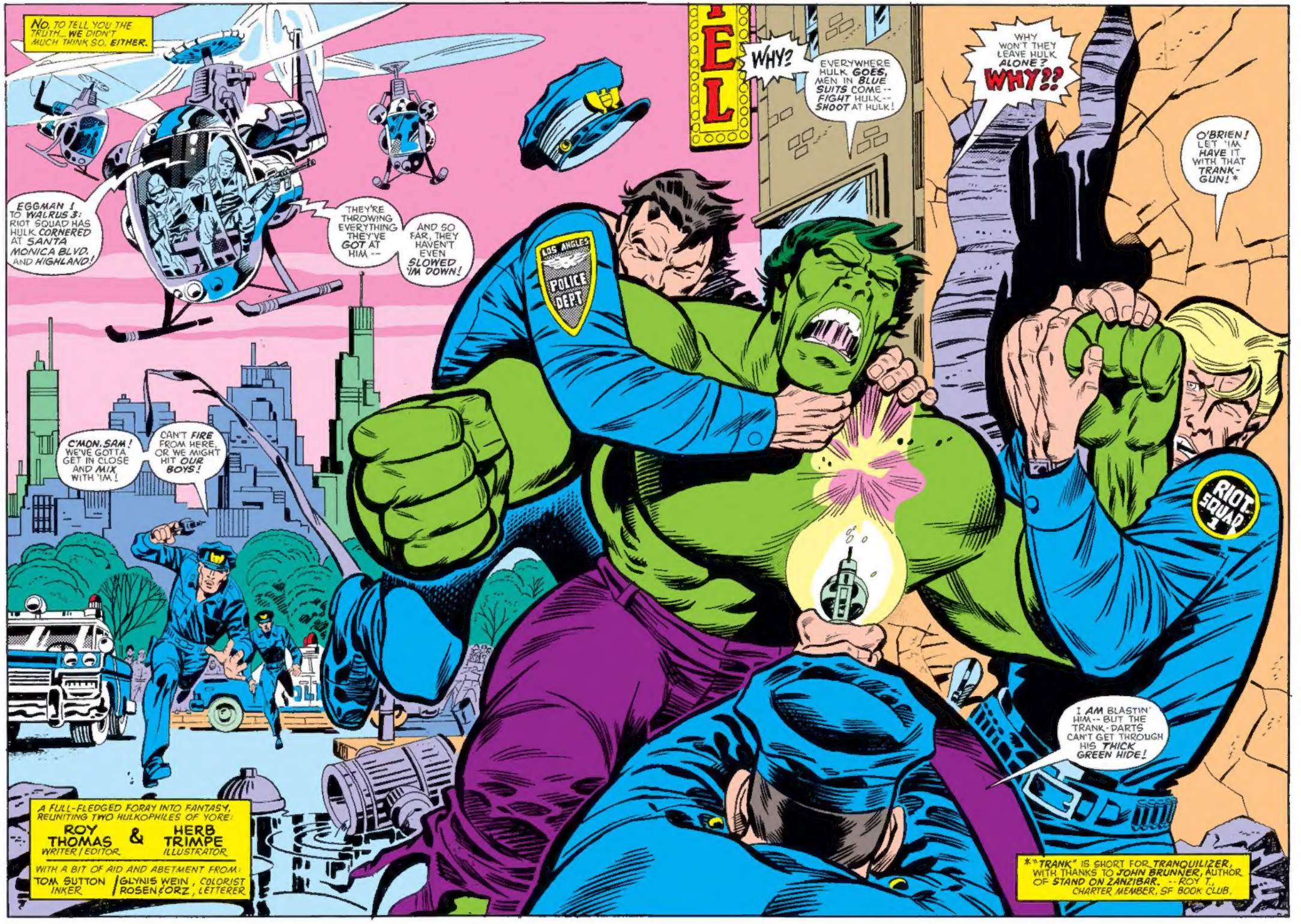

WHAT IF
MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
50¢
2
APR
02686
WHAT IF™
THE HULK®
ALL NEW! NEVER SEEN BEFORE!!
HAD THE BRAIN OF BRUCE BANNER?
STOP! DON'T SHOOT!! HE MAY BE A GREEN-SKINNED MONSTER--
--BUT HE'S ALSO MY SON-IN-LAW!
WE DARE YOU TO GUESS OUR STARTLING SHOCK ENDING!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
A SECOND SENSES-SHATTERING ADVENTURE IN THE PARADOX-PLAGUED COSMOS OF PARALLEL WORLDS!
WHAT IF THE™ HULK
HAD ALWAYS HAD BRUCE BANNER'S BRAIN?
THRAAKKK!
BUT FIRST-- LET'S SEE WHAT OUR EVER-RAMPAGING GREEN GOLIATH IS UP TO IN OUR TROUBLED WORLD, OKAY?
UH OH. WE HADDA ASK?!
WELL, TRY TURNING THE PAGE; MAYBE THINGS'LL GET MORE PEACEABLE AS WE ROLL RIGHT ALONG...!


NO, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH... WE DIDN'T MUCH THINK SO, EITHER.
EGGMAN 1 TO WALRUS 3: RIOT SQUAD HAS HULK CORNERED AT SANTA MONICA BLVD. AND HIGHLAND!
THEY'RE THROWING EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT AT HIM --
AND SO FAR, THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SLOWED 'IM DOWN!
C'MON, SAM! WE'VE GOTTA GET IN CLOSE AND MIX WITH 'IM!
CAN'T FIRE FROM HERE, OR WE MIGHT HIT OUR BOYS!
WHY?
EVERYWHERE HULK GOES, MEN IN BLUE SUITS COME -- FIGHT HULK -- SHOOT AT HULK!
WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE HULK ALONE? WHY??
O'BRIEN! LET 'IM HAVE IT WITH THAT TRANK-GUN! *
I AM BLASTIN' HIM -- BUT THE TRANK-DARTS CAN'T GET THROUGH HIS THICK GREEN HIDE!
LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPT
RIOT SQUAD 1
A FULL-FLEDGED FORAY INTO FANTASY, REUNITING TWO HULKOPHILES OF YORE:
ROY THOMAS WRITER / EDITOR & HERB TRIMPE ILLUSTRATOR
WITH A BIT OF AID AND ABETMENT FROM:
TOM SUTTON INKER / GLYNIS WEIN, COLORIST / ROSEN & ORZ, LETTERER
* "TRANK" IS SHORT FOR TRANQUILIZER, WITH THANKS TO JOHN BRUNNER, AUTHOR OF STAND ON ZANZIBAR. -- ROY T., CHARTER MEMBER, SF BOOK CLUB.

LOOK OUT! HE'S GOING TO---
HE DID ALREADY!
FROOOM!
WE'RE JUST LUCKY WE DIDN'T MAKE HIM MAD!

HULK IS TIRED OF MEN IN BLUE--AND MEN IN BROWN.
HULK IS TIRED OF YOU ALL!

HULK WANTS TO BE ALONE!
THERE HE GOES!
THOOM
EVEN OUR CHOPPERS WON'T BE ABLE TO CATCH HIM NOW.

BAH! HULK DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO CITY OF LITTLE MEN.
IT WAS PUNY BRUCE BANNER WHO WENT THERE--NOT HULK.
BANNER ALWAYS TAKES HULK TO PLACES WHERE BLUE MEN OR BROWN MEN CHASE HULK.

BUT, THEY WON'T CHASE HULK ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.
OR, IF THEY DO--

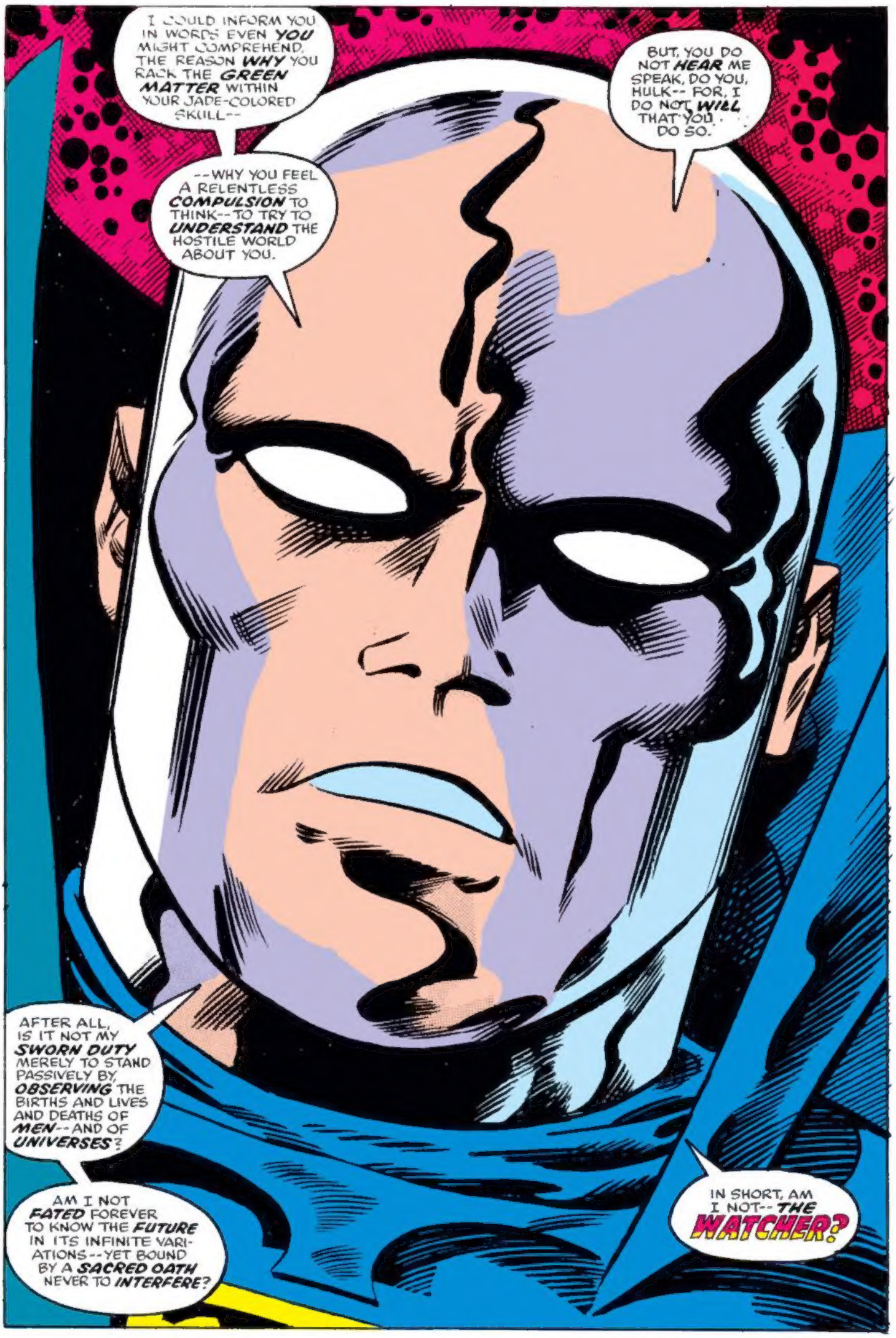
--HULK WILL SMASH!
KROMP!

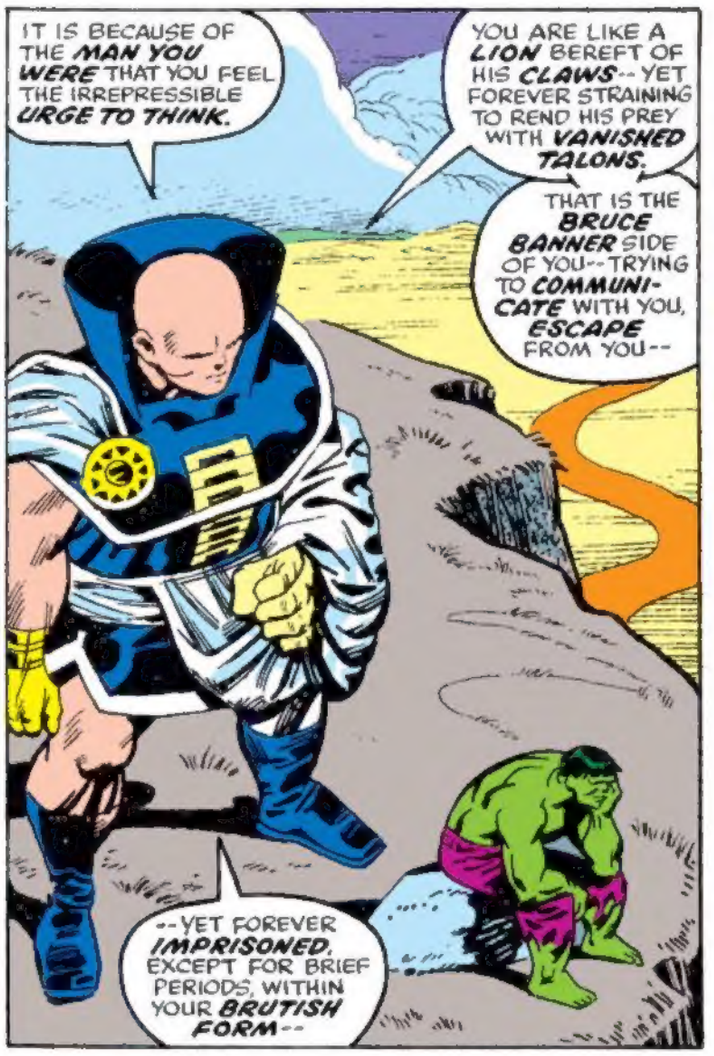
NO! THEY DID NOT FOLLOW HULK.
GOOD! THEN HULK CAN BE ALONE--

--ALONE TO THINK!
BUT, IT IS ALWAYS SO HARD FOR HULK TO THINK.
IT MAKES HULK'S HEAD HURT--WORSE THAN WHEN A WHOLE BUILDING FALLS ON IT!

AND--HULK DOESN'T KNOW--WHAT HULK IS TRYING TO THINK ABOUT.
IT JUST SEEMS--LIKE SOMETHING HULK SHOULD DO--

--BUT HULK DOESN'T KNOW WHY!
I COULD TELL YOU THE ANSWER TO YOUR DILEMMA, MY GREEN-SKINNED BEHEMOTH...


I COULD INFORM YOU IN WORDS EVEN YOU MIGHT COMPREHEND, THE REASON WHY YOU RACK THE GREEN MATTER WITHIN YOUR JADE-COLORED SKULL--
--WHY YOU FEEL A RELENTLESS COMPULSION TO THINK--TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE HOSTILE WORLD ABOUT YOU.
BUT, YOU DO NOT HEAR ME SPEAK, DO YOU, HULK-- FOR, I DO NOT WILL THAT YOU DO SO.
AFTER ALL, IS IT NOT MY SWORN DUTY MERELY TO STAND PASSIVELY BY, OBSERVING THE BIRTHS AND LIVES AND DEATHS OF MEN--AND OF UNIVERSES?
AM I NOT FATED FOREVER TO KNOW THE FUTURE IN ITS INFINITE VARIATIONS--YET BOUND BY A SACRED OATH NEVER TO INTERFERE?
IN SHORT, AM I NOT--THE WATCHER?

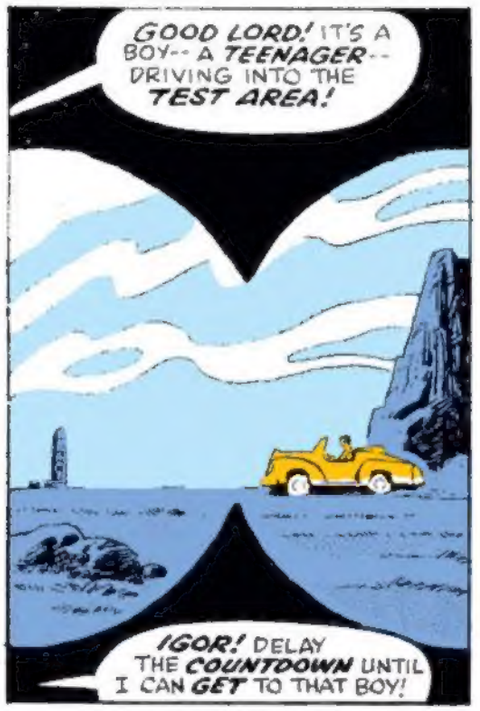

IT IS BECAUSE OF THE MAN YOU WERE THAT YOU FEEL THE IRREPRESSIBLE URGE TO THINK.
YOU ARE LIKE A LION BEREFT OF HIS CLAWS--YET FOREVER STRAINING TO REND HIS PREY WITH VANISHED TALONS.
THAT IS THE BRUCE BANNER SIDE OF YOU--TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU, ESCAPE FROM YOU--
--YET FOREVER IMPRISONED, EXCEPT FOR BRIEF PERIODS, WITHIN YOUR BRUTISH FORM--

--EVER SINCE THAT DIRE DAY, LONG SINCE, WHEN A TOWER OF TERROR STOOD AGAINST THE AFTERNOON SKY.*
THERE, ALONE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN DESERT OF THE EARTH'S UNITED STATES, STOOD THE MOST AWESOME WEAPON EVER CREATED BY MAN:
THE INCREDIBLE GAMMA BOMB!
*AS SEEN IN THE IMMORTAL HULK #1, 1962.--ROY.

"AND, MILES AWAY IN A SOLID CONCRETE BUNKER, NO MAN WAS MORE TENSE THAN DR. ROBERT BRUCE BANNER, THE MORTAL WHOSE GENIUS HAD CREATED THE G-BOMB...!
A FEW SECONDS MORE, AND WE'LL KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE SUCCEEDED OR NOT.
I STILL SAY YOU SHOULD HAVE SHARED YOUR SECRET WITH US, YOUR FELLOW SCIENTISTS. WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU?
QUIET, IGOR! HERE COMES GENERAL ROSS.

WELL, BANNER? ARE YOU READY TO TEST THAT BLAMED BOMB OF YOURS, OR NOT? ALL THESE DELAYS--!
BE FAIR, DADDY! I'M SURE DR. BANNER KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
THANK YOU, MISS ROSS. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, IT'S TIME FOR THE FINAL COUNTDOWN.
IT'S DING-DOG WELL ABOUT TIME!
CONFOUNDED MILKSOP!

IN A FEW MOMENTS, WE'LL FINALLY LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN POWERFUL GAMMA RAYS ARE RELEASED! WE--
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT--??


GOOD LORD! IT'S A BOY-- A TEENAGER-- DRIVING INTO THE TEST AREA!
IGOR! DELAY THE COUNTDOWN UNTIL I CAN GET TO THAT BOY!

DELAY THE...? SURE.
WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP MY FINGER OFF THE "HOLD" BUTTON...
...AND THAT WILL BE THE END OF BRUCE BANNER!

YOU! GET OUT OF THERE!
COOL IT, MAN! THE KIDS BET ME I WOULDN'T HAVE NERVE ENOUGH TO SNEAK PAST THE GUARDS.

HEY! WHAT'RE YOU TRYIN' TO DO-- MAKE THEM THINK I'M CHICKEN?
COME ON, YOU FOOL! WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH--
...BEFORE THE BOMB GOES OFF!
BOMB?

"MEANWHILE, AN UNSUSPECTING TECHNICIAN, NOT HAVING BEEN TOLD TO DELAY THE FIRING, TOUCHED A FINGER TO THE FATAL BUTTON...
THREE TWO ONE ZERO
FIRE

"...AND THE UNIVERSE WENT MAD!
THERE! YOU'RE SAFE! NOW I'LL--
AHRRK

"ALTHOUGH MANY MILES FROM BOMB ZERO, DR. BRUCE BANNER WAS BATHED IN THE FULL FORCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS GAMMA RAYS...!

"THE WORLD SEEMED TO STAND STILL, TREMBLING ON THE BRINK OF INFINITY, AS HIS EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM FILLED THE AIR.

"AND HE WAS STILL SCREAMING, HOURS LATER, WHEN--
HE'S COMING OUT OF IT!
THANK HEAVEN!

BANNER, IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
YOU ABSORBED THE FULL IMPACT OF THE GAMMA BOMB.
H-HOW DID I GET HERE?
MY NAME IS RICK JONES-- AND I BROUGHT YOU HERE.
YOU SAVED MY DUMB LIFE OUT THERE TODAY-- AND I FIGURED IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR YOU!
"YET, EVEN IN HIS WAKING MOMENTS, BRUCE BANNER KNEW HE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SOON BE DEAD-- OF RADIATION POISONING.

"AND, LEFT ALONE MOMENTS LATER WITH RICK JONES AS NIGHT FELL...
HOW LONG THEY GONNA KEEP US HERE, DOC?
I'M-- BEGINNING TO FEEL-- STRANGE. MY HEAD-- THROBBING--
THIS MUST BE... THE END!

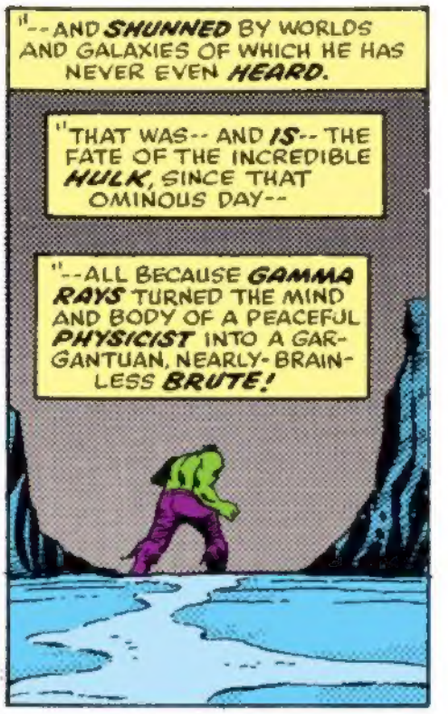
THE WHOLE WORLD'S GONE BATTY! EVEN THIS KOOKIE RADIO WON'T GIVE OUT WITH ANYTHING BUT STATIC.
KLIK KLIK KLIK
THAT'S NO RADIO--
IT'S A GEIGER COUNTER-- AND IT'S GOING WILD!

IT'S GETTING LOUDER-- AND LOUDER! FASTER-- AND FASTER!
WHAT'S HAPPENING??
KLIK KLI KLIK

WHAT IS HAPPENING???

HEY! LOOK AT YOU! YOU'VE-- CHANGED!
UHHN
GET OUT OF MY WAY, INSECT!
WHERE AM I? WHY AM I LOCKED IN HERE?
I WANT TO GET OUT!
OUT!
SKRAK!
"AND, THE RAMPAGING MONSTER DID GET OUT--TO BECOME A DANGEROUS MENACE AT LARGE--

"--HUNTED BY THE MILITARY, AND ESPECIALLY BY GENERAL T. E. 'THUNDERBOLT' ROSS--
"--FEARED BY ALL THE PLANET EARTH--
US
US

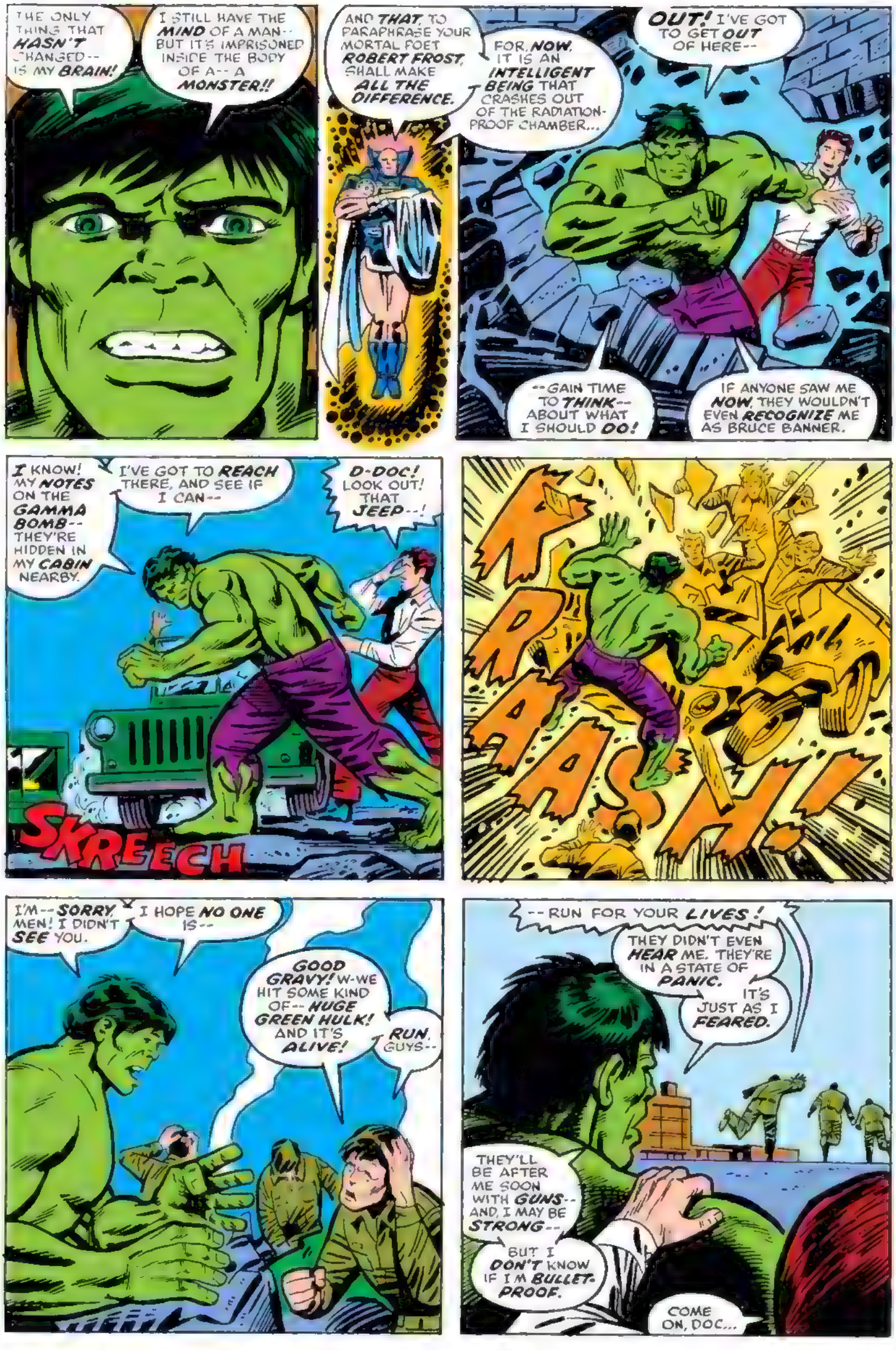

"--AND SHUNNED BY WORLDS AND GALAXIES OF WHICH HE HAS NEVER EVEN HEARD.
"THAT WAS-- AND IS-- THE FATE OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK, SINCE THAT OMINOUS DAY--
"--ALL BECAUSE GAMMA RAYS TURNED THE MIND AND BODY OF A PEACEFUL PHYSICIST INTO A GARGANTUAN, NEARLY-BRAINLESS BRUTE!

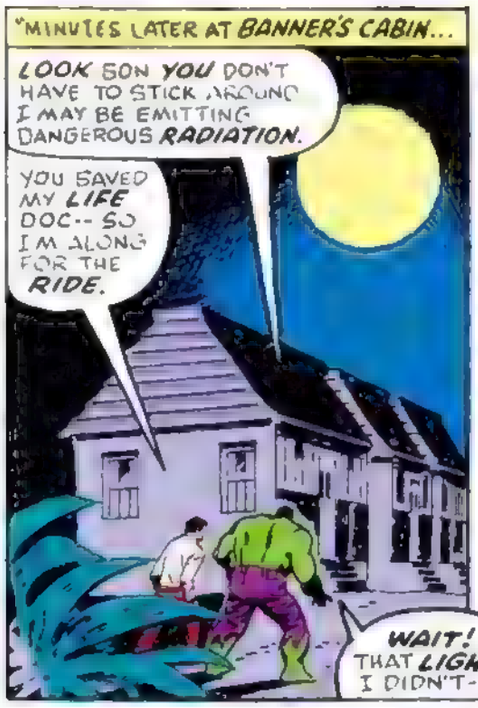
BUT HOLD! WHAT IF ONLY THE BODY OF BRUCE BANNER HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY THE GAMMA RAYS?
WHAT IF HIS MIND HAD REMAINED WHOLE--THOUGH TRAPPED IN A MISSHAPEN FORM?

"LET US GO BACK A FEW SECONDS-- AND ALSO SIDEWISE TO A TIME CONTINUUM WHICH EXISTS ALONGSIDE OUR OWN, SEPARATED FROM IT BY THE MEREST, THINNEST REALITY...!
WHAT IS HAPPENING???
KLIK KLIK KLIK
LEMME SEE, DOC...!

HEY! LOOK AT YOU! YOU'VE--CHANGED!
I-- HAVE?
GOOD LORD! MY HANDS!

YOUR HANDS AIN'T THE HALF OF IT, DOC!
HERE-- TAKE A PEEK IN THIS MIRROR.
HOLY--! I'VE CHANGED, ALL RIGHT-- GROWN ENORMOUSLY--
AND MY SKIN-- IT'S GREEN-- ALL OVER!


THE ONLY THING THAT HASN'T CHANGED -- IS MY BRAIN!
I STILL HAVE THE MIND OF A MAN -- BUT IT'S IMPRISONED INSIDE THE BODY OF A -- A MONSTER!!
AND THAT, TO PARAPHRASE YOUR MORTAL POET ROBERT FROST, SHALL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.
FOR, NOW, IT IS AN INTELLIGENT BEING THAT CRASHES OUT OF THE RADIATION-PROOF CHAMBER...
OUT! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE --
-- GAIN TIME TO THINK -- ABOUT WHAT I SHOULD DO!
IF ANYONE SAW ME NOW, THEY WOULDN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE ME AS BRUCE BANNER.
I KNOW! MY NOTES ON THE GAMMA BOMB -- THEY'RE HIDDEN IN MY CABIN NEARBY.
I'VE GOT TO REACH THERE, AND SEE IF I CAN --
D-DOC! LOOK OUT! THAT JEEP --!
SKREECH
RRASHH
I'M -- SORRY, MEN! I DIDN'T SEE YOU.
I HOPE NO ONE IS --
GOOD GRAVY! W-WE HIT SOME KIND OF -- HUGE GREEN HULK! AND IT'S ALIVE!
RUN, GUYS --
-- RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
THEY DIDN'T EVEN HEAR ME. THEY'RE IN A STATE OF PANIC.
IT'S JUST AS I FEARED.
THEY'LL BE AFTER ME SOON WITH GUNS -- AND, I MAY BE STRONG --
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I'M BULLET-PROOF.
COME ON, DOC...


"MINUTES LATER AT BANNER'S CABIN...
LOOK SON YOU DON'T HAVE TO STICK AROUND I MAY BE EMITTING DANGEROUS RADIATION.
YOU SAVED MY LIFE DOC-- SO I'M ALONG FOR THE RIDE.
WAIT! THAT LIGHT! I DIDN'T--

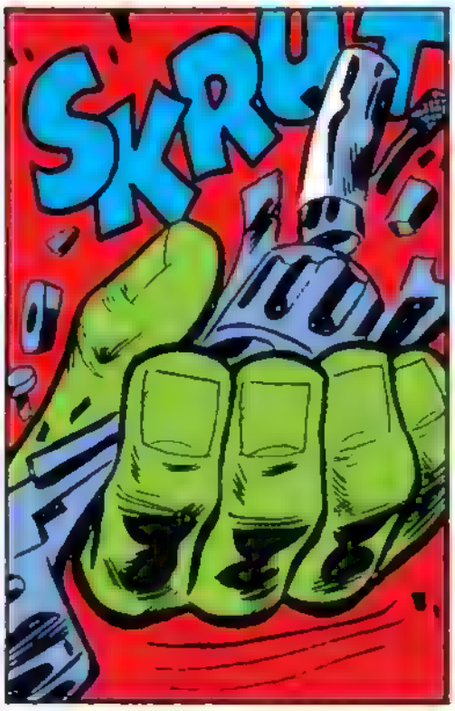
IGOR-- TEARING MY PLACE APART, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING!
OF COURSE! THE GAMMA RAY FORMULA!
THEN, HE MUST BE-- A SPY!

ALL RIGHT, IGOR-- THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE!
GOOD LORD!
I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE--

BUT YOU WON'T LIVE TO REPORT ME TO THE SECURITY POLICE! I'LL--
WHA--? I'VE PUT A .38 SLUG IN YOUR SHOULDER-- AND YOU'RE STILL COMING!
BLAM!

THAT ANSWERS ONE OF MY QUESTIONS, THEN...
I AM BULLETPROOF!
FOR, THAT BULLET DIDN'T GO INTO MY SHOULDER; IT BOUNCED OFF!
BAM!

SO, SINCE YOU'VE GOT NO MORE USE FOR THIS LITTLE TOY...!


SKRUT

TTCH

AND NOW I OUGHT TO -
N-NO! I-- PLEASE! DON'T--!
DOC! STOP IT! PUT HIM DOWN!
YOU'LL KILL HIM IF YOU HIT HIM!!
"IN THAT INSTANT, THE BESTIAL SIDE OF BANNER'S NEW PERSONA STRIVES ITS HARDEST TO TAKE CONTROL OF HIM...

"BUT, IT IS A HUMAN, RATIONAL MIND THAT RESTS BENEATH THAT INCH-THICK SKULL...
"...THE MIND OF A MAN OF SCIENCE-- A GOOD MAN--

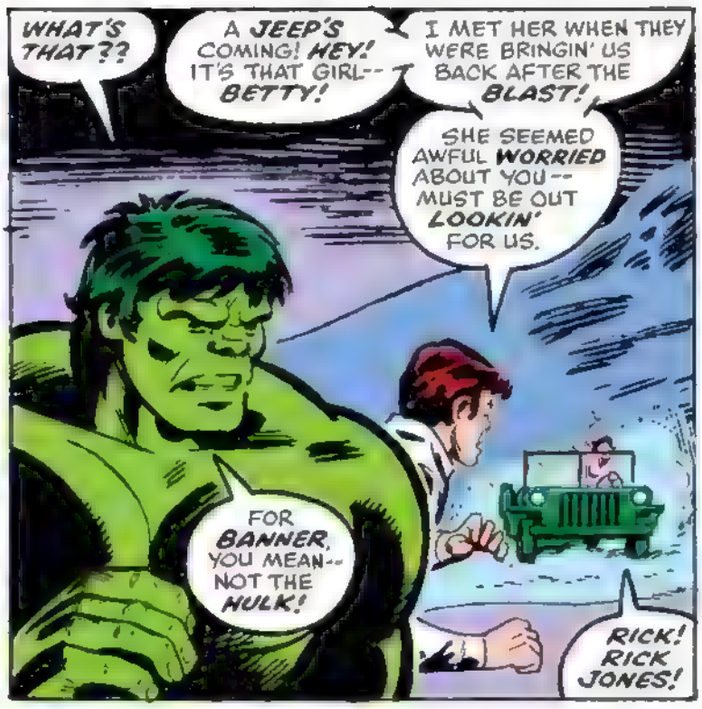
"--A MAN AT LAST, TRIUMPHANT!
ALL RIGHT! I SHOULD KILL YOU-- BUT I WON'T.
IT'S BETTER THAT YOU STAND TRIAL-- AS A TRAITOR.
A-ANY-THING-- ONLY, PLEASE-- LEAVE ME ALONE!

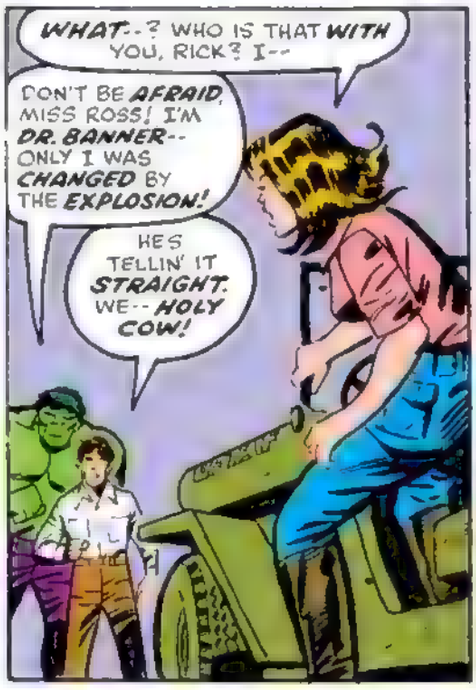
THAT I WILL! BUT YOU'LL STAY HERE-- WHILE THE BOY AND I SEND FOR THE SECURITY POLICE.
AND IF YOU'RE NOT HERE WHEN THEY COME-- HEAVEN HELP YOU WHEN I FIND YOU!
I-- WILL BE HERE.

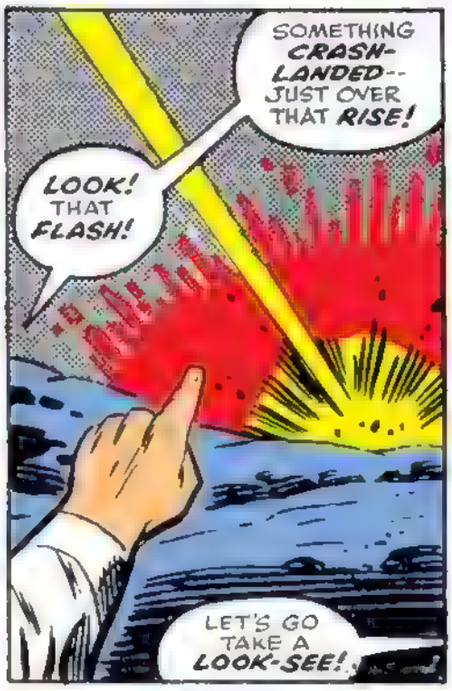
I DON'T DARE FLEE.
AND YET, MY MASTER WILL EXECUTE ME, IF MY MISSION HERE IS A TOTAL FAILURE.
I KNOW! I'LL USE MY TRANSISTORIZED SHORT-WAVE SENDING SET, PASTED ONTO MY THUMBNAIL.
SLAM!
IT WILL SEND A MESSAGE THOUSANDS OF MILES-- TO MY SUPERIORS!

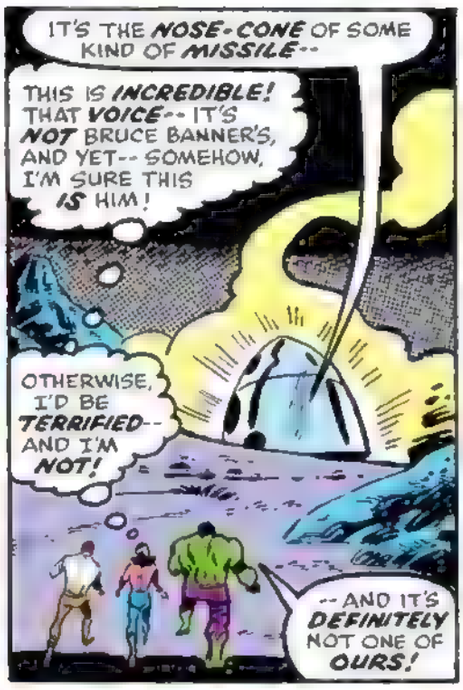
"AND, HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD, MERE MINUTES LATER...
SO! IN AMERICA, THERE IS A MONSTER WHOSE MUSCULAR MIGHT SEEMS EQUAL TO MY MENTAL POWER.
I MUST FIND HIM! SUCH A CREATURE MUST SERVE-- THE GARGOYLE!

"Hours later, just before SUNRISE. . .
AFTER THE AUTHORITIES HAVE DEALT WITH IGOR I'LL RETURN TO THE CABIN TO WORK ON AN ANTIDOTE.
IF THERE IS AN ANTIDOTE!
DON'T TALK THAT WAY DOC. THERE'S GOTTA BE!
I HOPE SO, I DON'T WANT TO REMAIN WHAT THAT FLEEING SOLDIER CALLED ME--A HULK!


WHAT'S THAT??
A JEEP'S COMING! HEY! IT'S THAT GIRL-- BETTY!
I MET HER WHEN THEY WERE BRINGIN' US BACK AFTER THE BLAST!
SHE SEEMED AWFUL WORRIED ABOUT YOU-- MUST BE OUT LOOKIN' FOR US.
FOR BANNER, YOU MEAN-- NOT THE HULK!
RICK! RICK JONES!

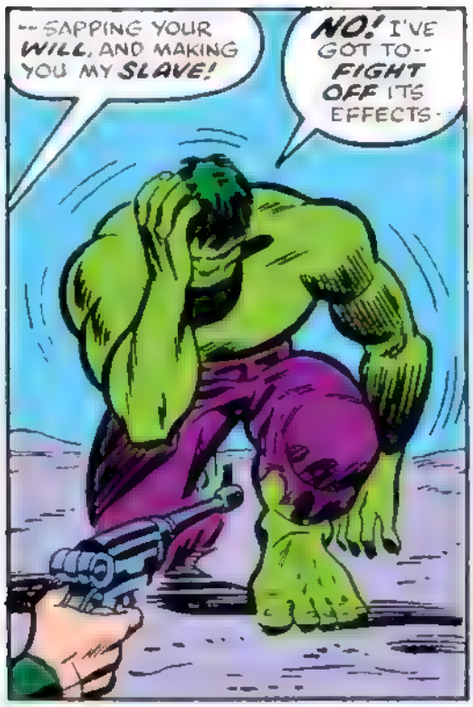

WHAT--? WHO IS THAT WITH YOU, RICK? I--
DON'T BE AFRAID, MISS ROSS! I'M DR. BANNER-- ONLY I WAS CHANGED BY THE EXPLOSION!
HE'S TELLIN' IT STRAIGHT. WE--HOLY COW!


SOMETHING CRASH-LANDED-- JUST OVER THAT RISE!
LOOK! THAT FLASH!
LET'S GO TAKE A LOOK-SEE!


IT'S THE NOSE-CONE OF SOME KIND OF MISSILE--
THIS IS INCREDIBLE! THAT VOICE-- IT'S NOT BRUCE BANNER'S, AND YET-- SOMEHOW, I'M SURE THIS IS HIM!
OTHERWISE, I'D BE TERRIFIED-- AND I'M NOT!
--AND IT'S DEFINITELY NOT ONE OF OURS!

YOU ARE CORRECT, MONSTER. IT IS MINE.
YOUR COUNTRY'S DEFENSES DESTROYED THE REST OF MY CRAFT, BUT I GUIDED THE NOSE-CONE HERE.
"YOUR COUNTRY"? THEN YOU MUST BE ANOTHER SPY-- IN LEAGUE WITH IGOR!
YOU CAN JOIN HIM-- IN PRISON!

FOOL! THE GARGOYLE DID NOT COME ALL THIS WAY TO FAIL!
PUT AWAY THAT PISTOL! BULLETS WON'T HURT M-- ARRGH!
ZAP!
THIS WEAPON SHOOTS A PELLET OF MY OWN DEVISING--

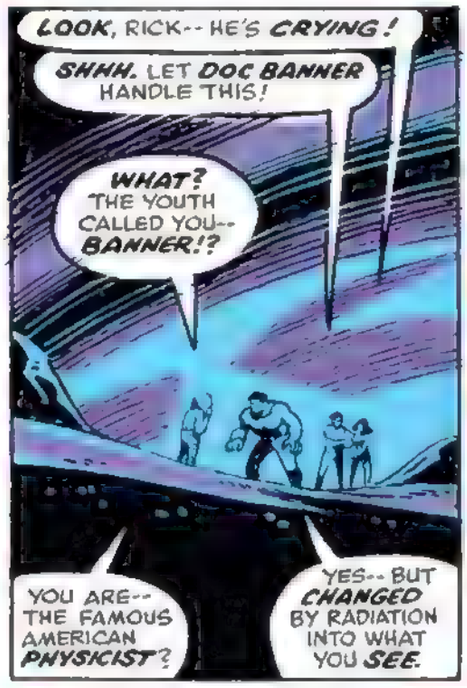

--SAPPING YOUR WILL, AND MAKING YOU MY SLAVE!
NO! I'VE GOT TO-- FIGHT OFF ITS EFFECTS-

GOT TO--
YES!

NOW, GARGOYLE--IF THAT'S YOUR NAME--
--AND IF YOU'RE REALLY THE INFAMOUS RED SCIENTIST I'VE HEARD RUMORS OF, ALL THESE YEARS--

--THIS SEEMS TO BE MY NIGHT FOR TAKING HARMFUL TOYS AWAY FROM PEOPLE!
Y-YOU HAVE PREVAILED-- AND I AM DEFEATED-- HELPLESS!

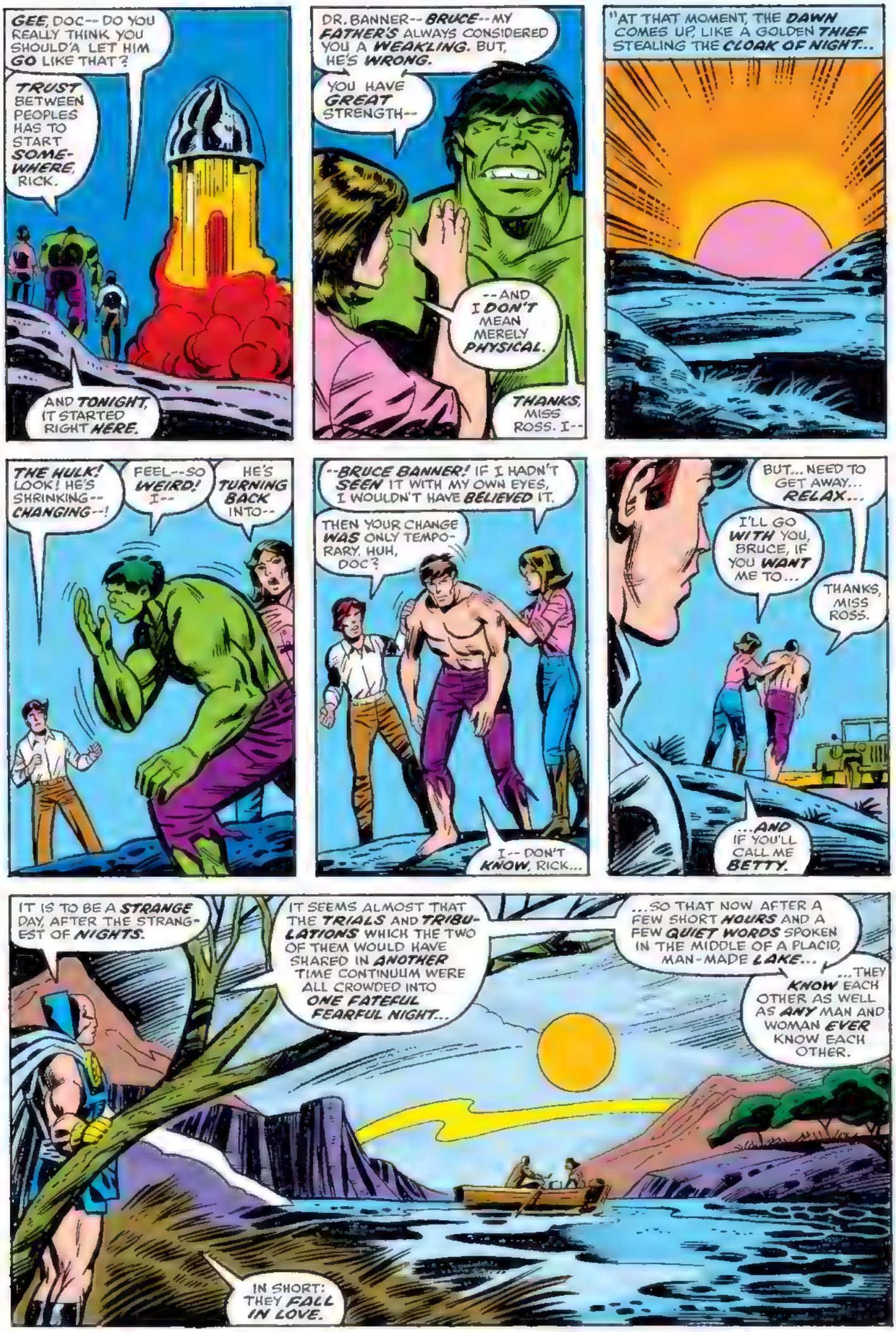
IT IS NOT BAD ENOUGH THAT I AM A LOATHSOME FREAK...
NOW, I MUST BE BEATEN AS WELL-- BY A GREEN-SKINNED MONSTER!


LOOK, RICK-- HE'S CRYING!
SHHH. LET DOC BANNER HANDLE THIS!
WHAT? THE YOUTH CALLED YOU-- BANNER!?
YOU ARE-- THE FAMOUS AMERICAN PHYSICIST?
YES-- BUT CHANGED BY RADIATION INTO WHAT YOU SEE.

THEN, YOU TOO MUST KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE HATED-- DESPISED FOR YOUR UGLINESS.
NOT YET.
BUT, IF I AM, I'LL LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT-- JUST AS YOU'LL HAVE TO, FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

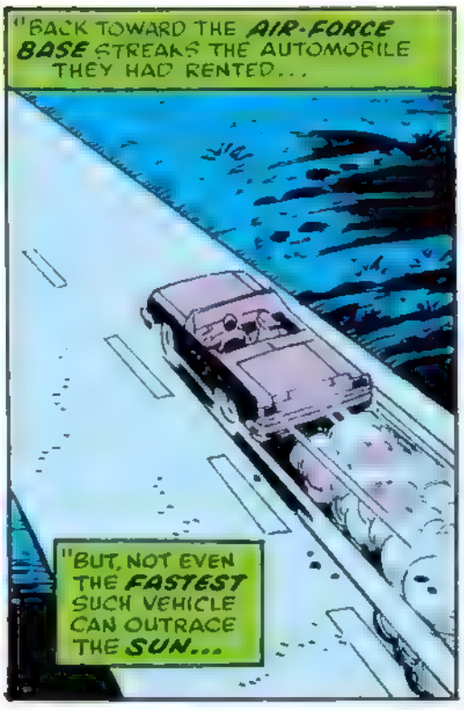
YOU MEAN-- YOU'RE NOT GOING TO KILL ME?
I'M A SCIENTIST, NOT A MURDERER.
GO BACK TO YOUR OWN LAND AND TRY WORKING FOR PEACE FOR A CHANGE-- INSTEAD OF FOR CONQUEST.
YES - YES I WILL! I SWEAR IT!

BUT, IT WILL BE EASIER NOW TO BE THE GARGOYLE-- KNOWING THAT, HERE IN AMERICA, THERE IS A HULK WHO IS MY EQUAL...
--AND YOUR FRIEND!
AND YOUR FRIEND.


GEE, DOC-- DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD'A LET HIM GO LIKE THAT?
TRUST BETWEEN PEOPLES HAS TO START SOMEWHERE, RICK.
AND TONIGHT, IT STARTED RIGHT HERE.
DR. BANNER-- BRUCE-- MY FATHER'S ALWAYS CONSIDERED YOU A WEAKLING. BUT, HE'S WRONG.
YOU HAVE GREAT STRENGTH--
--AND I DON'T MEAN MERELY PHYSICAL.
THANKS, MISS ROSS. I--
"AT THAT MOMENT, THE DAWN COMES UP, LIKE A GOLDEN THIEF STEALING THE CLOAK OF NIGHT...
THE HULK! LOOK! HE'S SHRINKING-- CHANGING--!
FEEL--SO WEIRD! I--
HE'S TURNING BACK INTO--
--BRUCE BANNER! IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT.
THEN YOUR CHANGE WAS ONLY TEMPORARY, HUH, DOC?
I-- DON'T KNOW, RICK...
BUT... NEED TO GET AWAY... RELAX...
I'LL GO WITH YOU, BRUCE, IF YOU WANT ME TO...
THANKS, MISS ROSS.
...AND IF YOU'LL CALL ME BETTY.
IT IS TO BE A STRANGE DAY, AFTER THE STRANGEST OF NIGHTS.
IT SEEMS ALMOST THAT THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS WHICH THE TWO OF THEM WOULD HAVE SHARED IN ANOTHER TIME CONTINUUM WERE ALL CROWDED INTO ONE FATEFUL FEARFUL NIGHT...
...SO THAT NOW AFTER A FEW SHORT HOURS AND A FEW QUIET WORDS SPOKEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A PLACID, MAN-MADE LAKE...
...THEY KNOW EACH OTHER AS WELL AS ANY MAN AND WOMAN EVER KNOW EACH OTHER.
IN SHORT: THEY FALL IN LOVE.

"THEN ABRUPTLY AS SHADOWS GROW LONG...
BETTY! THE TIME! I DIDN'T REALIZE--
WHAT'S WRONG, BRUCE?

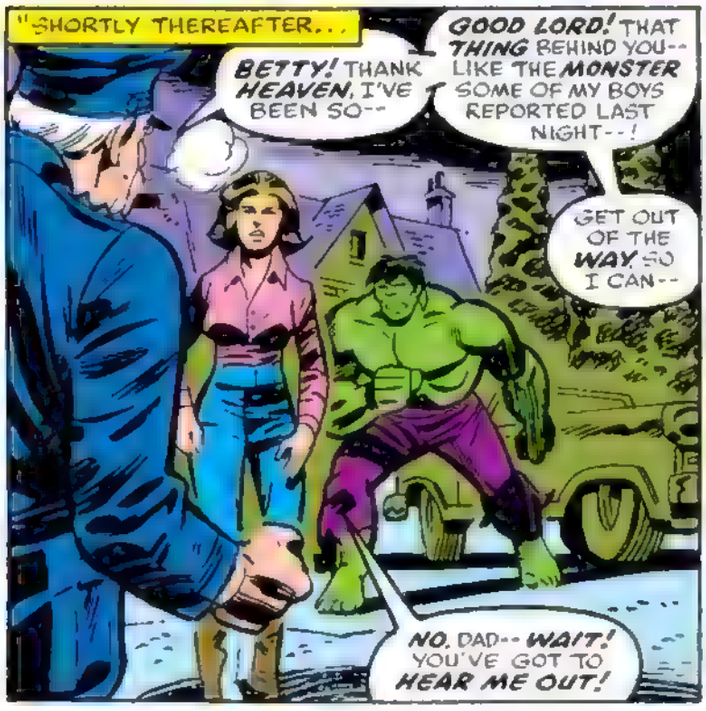
MAYBE NOTHING-- MAYBE A LOT!
COME ON! I'VE GOT TO GET YOU HOME-- BEFORE IT GETS DARK!


"BACK TOWARD THE AIR-FORCE BASE STREAKS THE AUTOMOBILE THEY HAD RENTED...
"BUT, NOT EVEN THE FASTEST SUCH VEHICLE CAN OUTRACE THE SUN...

"..AND IT IS USELESS TO TRY.
WHAT IS IT, DARLING? CAN'T YOU TELL ME?
CAN'T YOU GUESS?
I'D HOPED I WAS WRONG--

BUT NOW, I CAN FEEL THAT I WAS RIGHT-- AND THAT WHEN DARKNESS COMES--

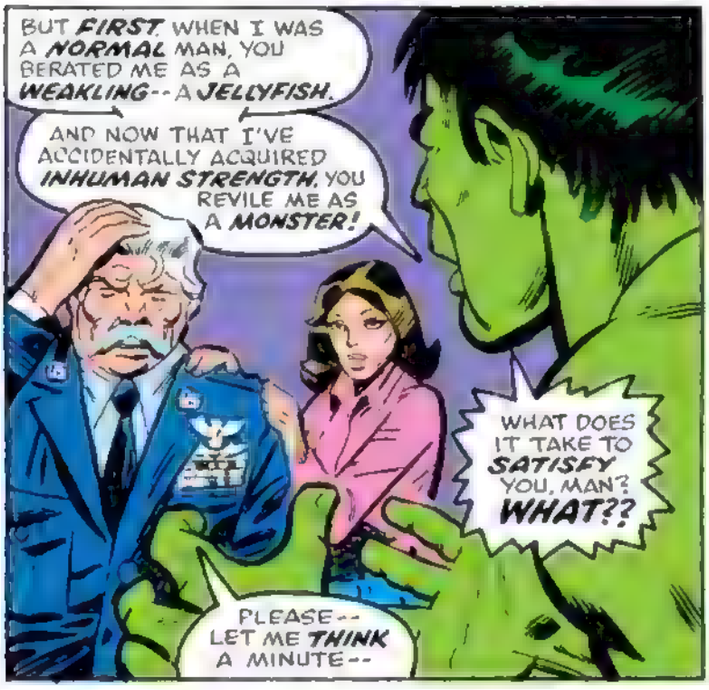
--SO DOES THE HULK!


"SHORTLY THEREAFTER...
BETTY! THANK HEAVEN, I'VE BEEN SO--
GOOD LORD! THAT THING BEHIND YOU-- LIKE THE MONSTER SOME OF MY BOYS REPORTED LAST NIGHT--!
GET OUT OF THE WAY, SO I CAN--
NO, DAD-- WAIT! YOU'VE GOT TO HEAR ME OUT!

"AND, BECAUSE OF THE SHEER URGENCY IN HER VOICE, HE DOES. BUT THEN--
YOU MEAN-- YOU THINK YOU LOVE THIS-- THIS--!?
I TOLD YOU, DAD-- HE'S DR. BRUCE BANNER.
THE GAMMA RAYS DID IT-- THE EXPLOSION--!
WHATEVER CAUSED IT, I WON'T HAVE MY DAUGHTER PARADING AROUND WITH A BIG GREEN HULKING BRUTE THAT--

THAT DOES IT!
THRAK!
HUH?

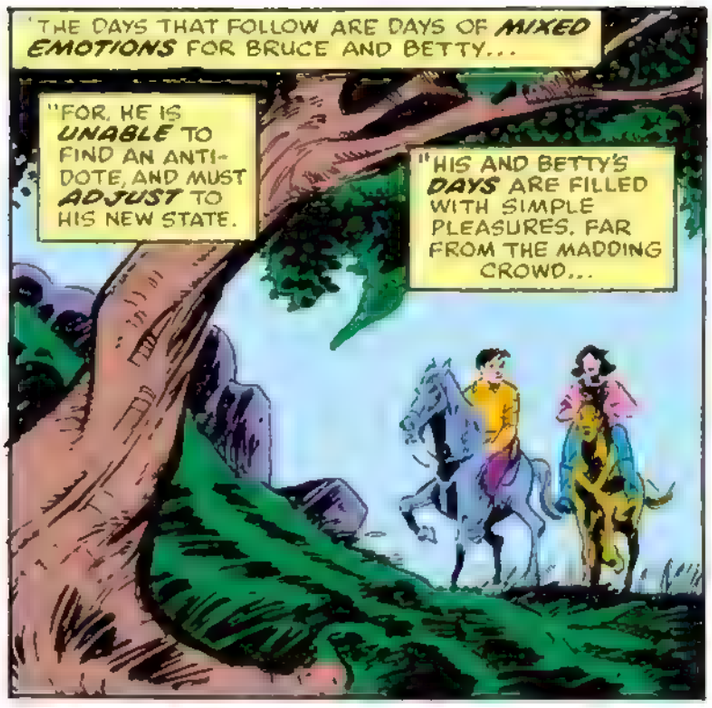
Y-YOU DESTROYED THAT CAR-- GOVERNMENT PROPERTY--DEMOLISHED IT WITH ONE SWEEP OF YOUR FIST!
LISTEN! KILL ME IF YOU WANT TO-- ONLY, GET AWAY FROM MY DAUGHTER! I--
I DON'T INTEND TO KILL ANYBODY, GENERAL...


BUT FIRST WHEN I WAS A NORMAL MAN, YOU BERATED ME AS A WEAKLING--A JELLYFISH.
AND NOW THAT I'VE ACCIDENTALLY ACQUIRED INHUMAN STRENGTH, YOU REVILE ME AS A MONSTER!
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SATISFY YOU, MAN? WHAT??
PLEASE-- LET ME THINK A MINUTE--

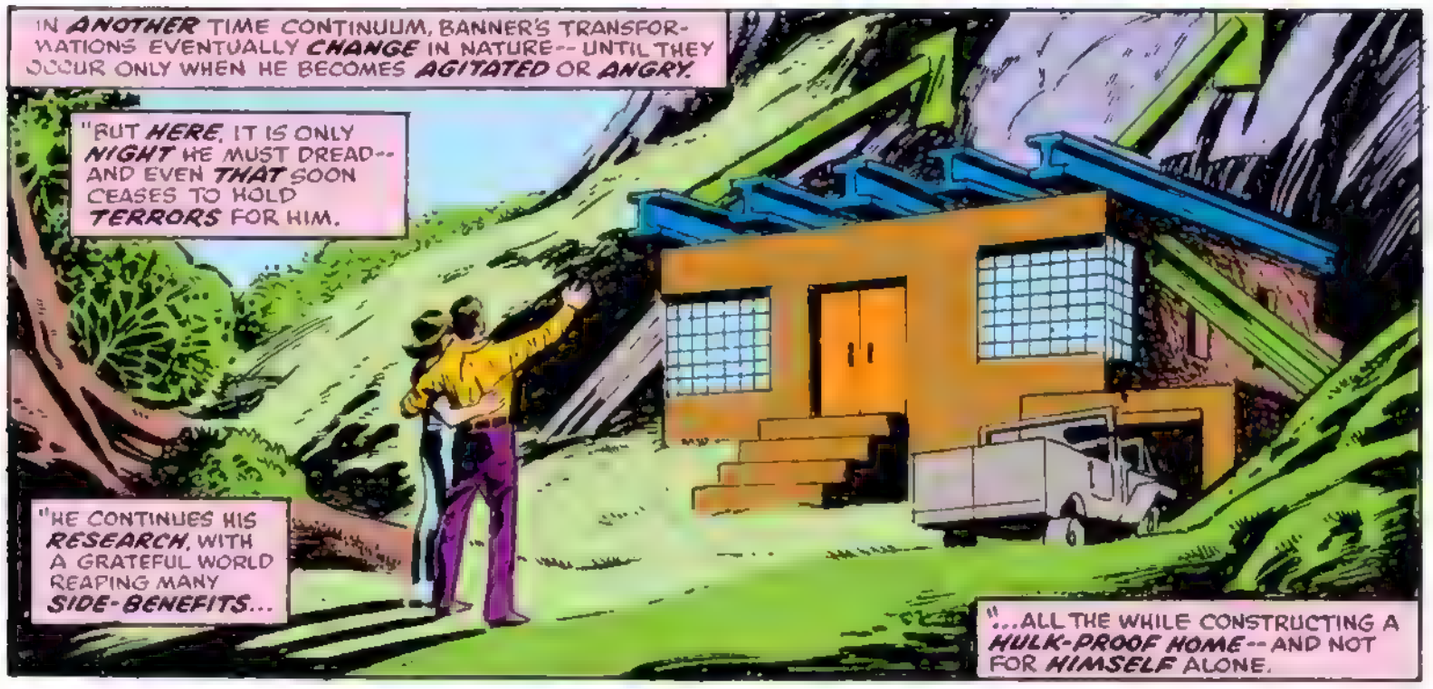
I KNOW YOU GOT THIS WAY BECAUSE OF THAT GAMMA-BOMB BLAST, WHILE YOU WERE SAVING THAT TEENAGER.
YOU'RE A BRILLIANT MAN-- ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST VALUABLE SCIENTISTS--
EVEN THE GROTESQUE FORM YOU WEAR-- YOU GOT IN THE SERVICE OF YOUR COUNTRY--!
SO?

I...I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, BOTH OF YOU.
I'M AN OLD FOOL...AND I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT UP TO YOU BY KEEPING THE AUTHORITIES OFF YOUR BACK WHILE YOU WORK ON AN ANTIDOTE.
THANK YOU, SIR. I KNEW YOU'D COME THRU FOR US
JUST, UH-- EASY ON THE HAND, OKAY?
SORRY.

DID YOU HEAR THAT, HONEY? NOW I CAN KEEP HIDDEN-- UNTIL I CAN CURE MYSELF.
IF THERE IS A PERMANENT CURE, WHICH I CAN'T BE SURE OF.
CURE OR NO CURE, DARLING-- ALL I WANT IS TO BE WITH YOU.
THEN YOU WILL BE, LITTLE LADY-- YOU WILL BE!

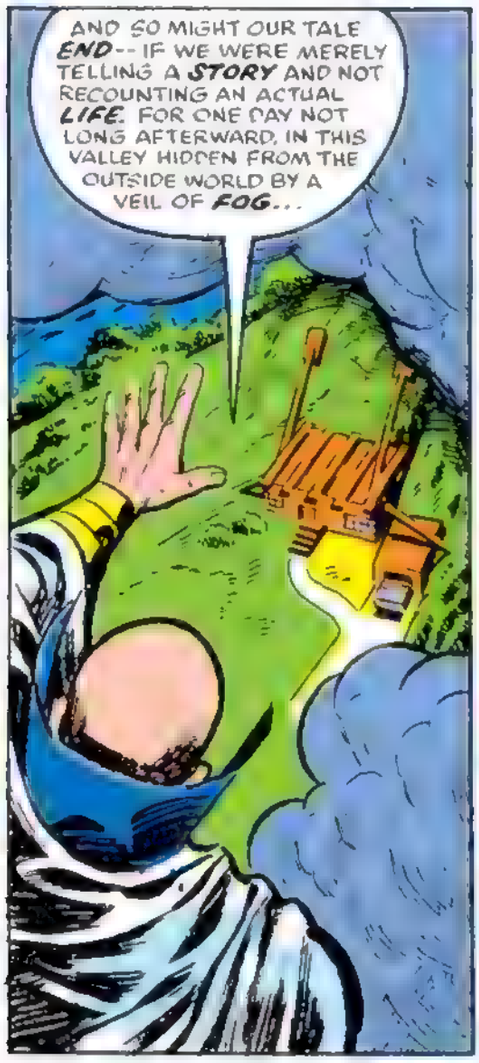

"THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW ARE DAYS OF MIXED EMOTIONS FOR BRUCE AND BETTY...
"FOR, HE IS UNABLE TO FIND AN ANTI-DOTE, AND MUST ADJUST TO HIS NEW STATE.
"HIS AND BETTY'S DAYS ARE FILLED WITH SIMPLE PLEASURES, FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD...

"...WHILE, IN THE NIGHT, THERE ARE MORE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES...
"...SUCH AS SAIL-PLANING, WITH AN ENGINE OF ONE HULK-POWER.


IN ANOTHER TIME CONTINUUM, BANNER'S TRANSFORMATIONS EVENTUALLY CHANGE IN NATURE-- UNTIL THEY OCCUR ONLY WHEN HE BECOMES AGITATED OR ANGRY.
"BUT HERE, IT IS ONLY NIGHT HE MUST DREAD-- AND EVEN THAT SOON CEASES TO HOLD TERRORS FOR HIM.
"HE CONTINUES HIS RESEARCH, WITH A GRATEFUL WORLD REAPING MANY SIDE-BENEFITS...
"...ALL THE WHILE CONSTRUCTING A HULK-PROOF HOME-- AND NOT FOR HIMSELF ALONE.

"THUS, NOT LONG AFTERWARD, HE AND THE FORMER BETTY ROSS ARE MARRIED.
"ONLY TWO PERSONS AMONG ALL THE WEDDING GUESTS KNOW THEIR STRANGE SECRET:
"THE FATHER OF THE BRIDE- AND A LAD NAMED RICK.

"FOR, MEN AND WOMEN HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE TOGETHER OVERCOMING MANY HANDICAPS, OVER THE AGES...
"...AND A HUSBAND WHO TURNS INTO THE HULK EIGHT HOURS OUT OF EACH 24 IS NOT THE WORST THING THAT CAN HAPPEN TO A MARRIAGE.
HERE YOU ARE, DEAR... YOUR FAVORITE...
MIXED GREENS!

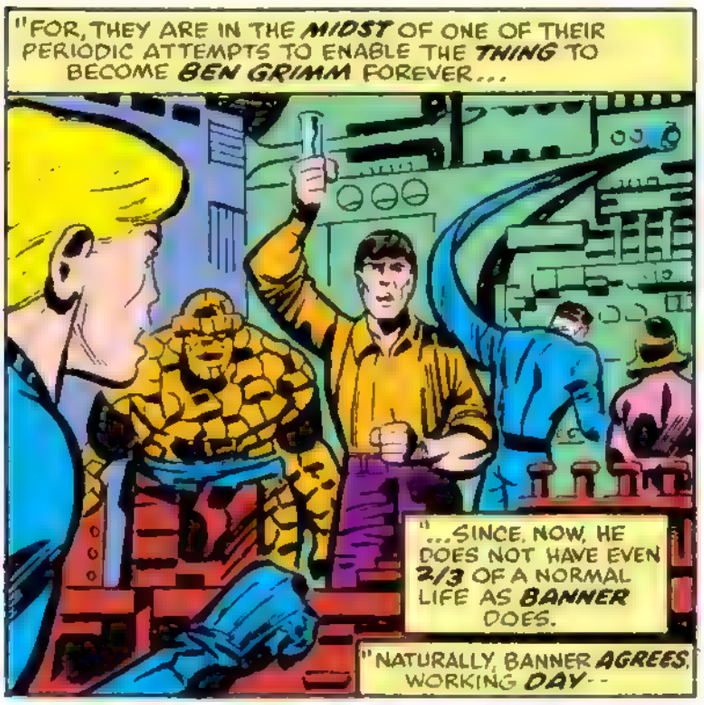

AND SO MIGHT OUR TALE END-- IF WE WERE MERELY TELLING A STORY AND NOT RECOUNTING AN ACTUAL LIFE. FOR ONE DAY NOT LONG AFTERWARD, IN THIS VALLEY HIDDEN FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD BY A VEIL OF FOG...

THERE COMES A FATEFUL TELE-PHONE CALL:
OH, HELLO, GENERAL. BETTY AND I WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT--
WHAT? YOU SAY THE FANTASTIC FOUR WANTS TO SEE ME!?
I'M ON MY WAY, SIR!
IS ANYTHING WRONG, DARLING?

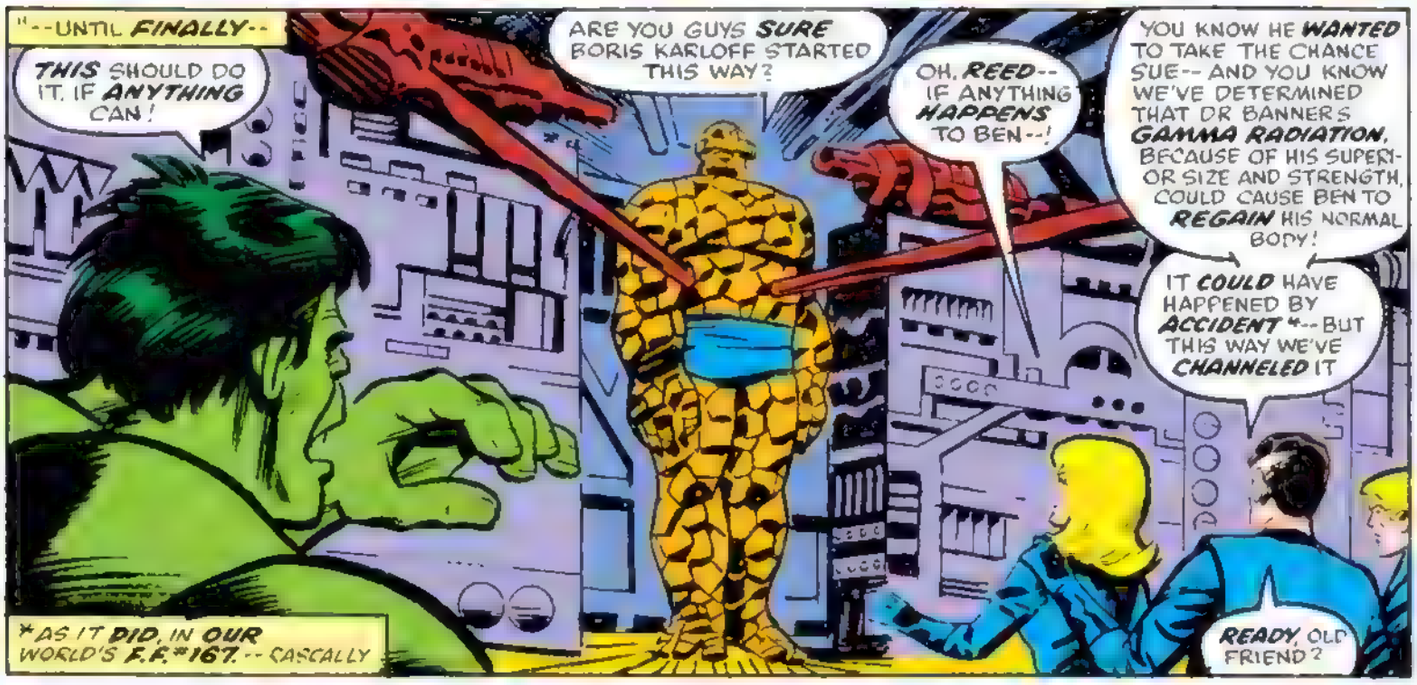
WRONG? WHAT CAN BE WRONG WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR, HONEY?
I JUST HAVE TO GO AWAY FOR A FEW DAYS, THAT'S ALL. OKAY?
YOU KNOW IT IS-- BUT HURRY BACK.
OTHERWISE THE WIVES AT THE BASE WILL BE AFTER ME AGAIN TO JOIN THEIR STUPID BRIDGE CLUB!

TWO NIGHTS LATER, A HUGE GREEN FORM HURTLES HIGH ABOVE THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE...
BUT, BRUCE BANNER'S OTHER SELF IS WELL KNOWN TO THE WORLD...
SO THERE IS NO PANIC, ONLY IDLE CURIOSITY...

...ABOUT THE SCENE IN THE BAXTER BUILDING, AS TWO GOLIATHS MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME!
PUT 'ER THERE, DOC! I BEEN WANTIN' TA MEET YOU!
SAME HERE, MR. GRIMM! WE'VE GOT A LOT IN COMMON, AFTER ALL.
AS DO YOU AND I, DR. BANNER.
HEY, REED-- YOU SOUND ALMOST JEALOUS!
NOW, JUST TELL ME WHAT I CAN DO FOR THE WORLD-FAMOUS FANTASTIC FOUR!
BUT, THEIR ANSWER SOMEWHAT SHOCKS THE GREEN-SKINNED BRUCE BANNER...

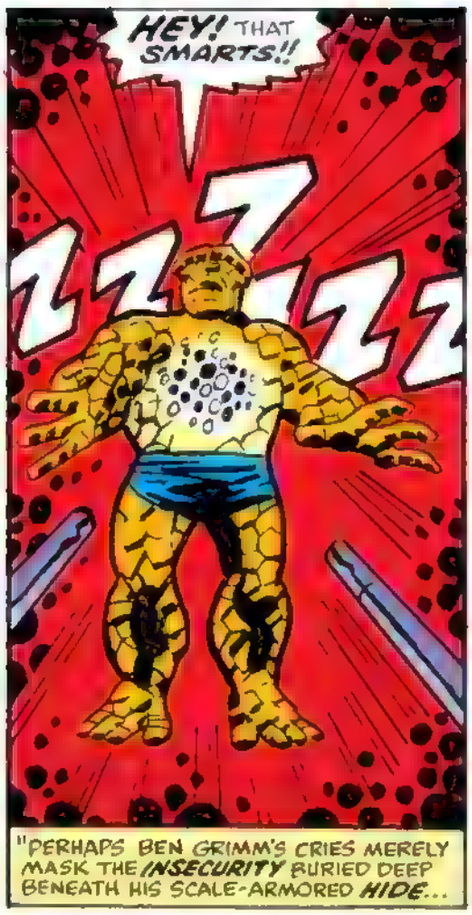

"FOR, THEY ARE IN THE MIDST OF ONE OF THEIR PERIODIC ATTEMPTS TO ENABLE THE THING TO BECOME BEN GRIMM FOREVER...
"...SINCE, NOW, HE DOES NOT HAVE EVEN 2/3 OF A NORMAL LIFE AS BANNER DOES.
"NATURALLY, BANNER AGREES, WORKING DAY--

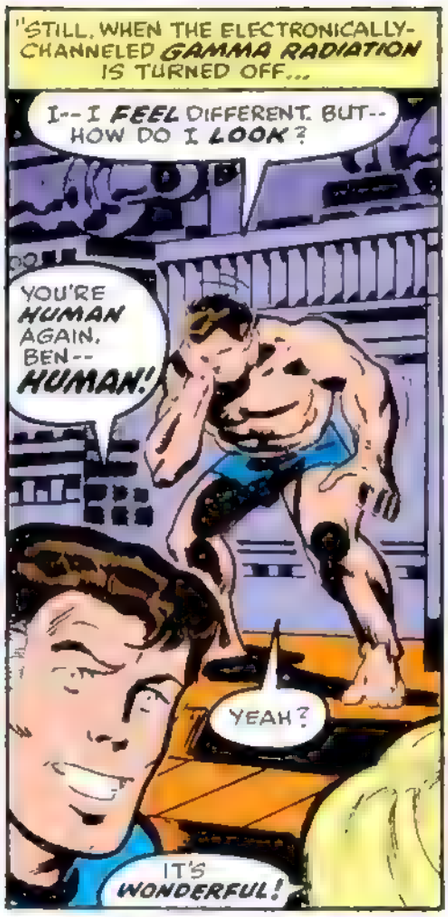
"--AND NIGHT--
HOLD 'ER STEADY, DOC, WHILE I MAKE THESE FINAL ADJUSTMENTS!
AS LONG AS YOU FINISH BEFORE MORNING!
HEY! WHAT ABOUT ME??

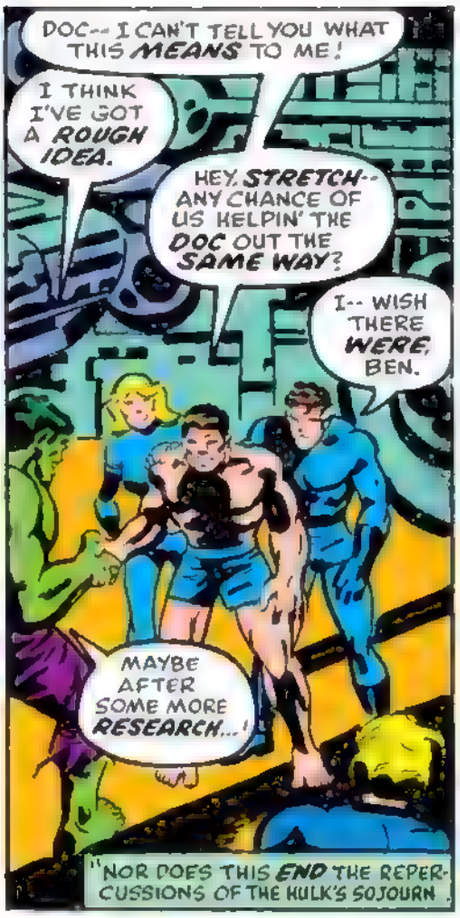

"--UNTIL FINALLY--
THIS SHOULD DO IT, IF ANYTHING CAN!
ARE YOU GUYS SURE BORIS KARLOFF STARTED THIS WAY?
OH, REED-- IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO BEN--!
YOU KNOW HE WANTED TO TAKE THE CHANCE SUE-- AND YOU KNOW WE'VE DETERMINED THAT DR BANNER'S GAMMA RADIATION, BECAUSE OF HIS SUPERIOR SIZE AND STRENGTH, COULD CAUSE BEN TO REGAIN HIS NORMAL BODY!
IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED BY ACCIDENT*-- BUT THIS WAY WE'VE CHANNELED IT
READY, OLD FRIEND?
*AS IT DID, IN OUR WORLD'S F.F. #167. -- CASCALLY

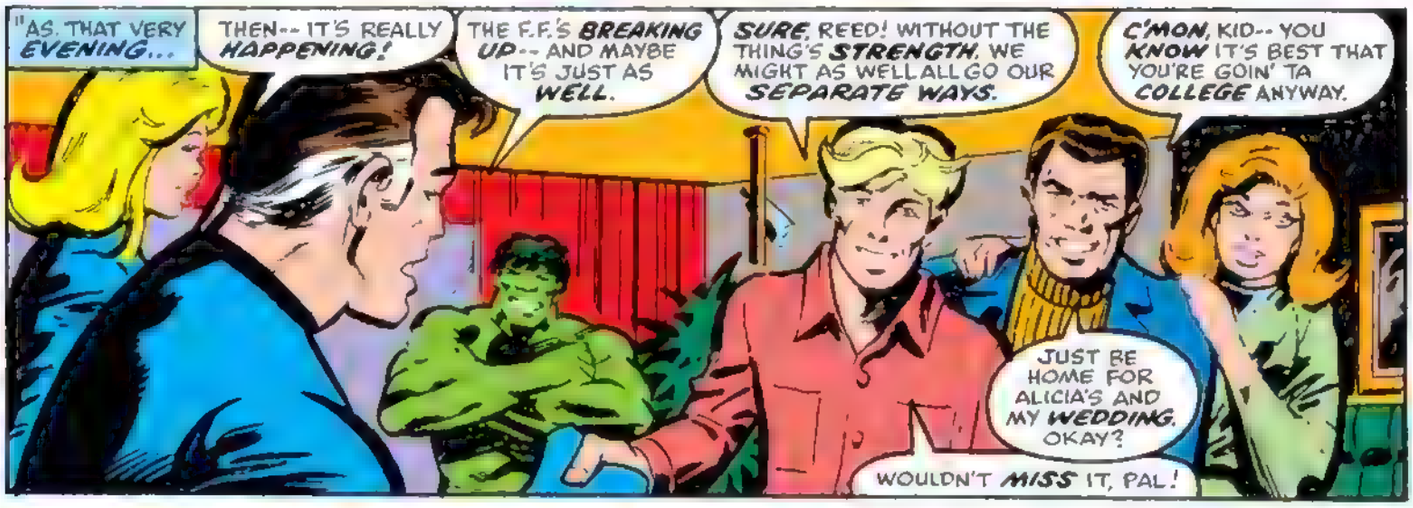
YEAH, OKAY-- BUT LISTEN, STRETCH--
YOU SURE IT WOULDN'T BE THE SAME IF I JUST KEPT ON WEARIN' DARK GLASSES?
NAW I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD

YOU KNOW THIS IS YOUR ONLY CHANCE, BEN-- FOR YOU, AND FOR ALICIA.
BUT, IF YOU WANT TO CALL IT OFF--
NO! GO AHEAD, LEADER-MAN!
THEN HERE GOES!


HEY! THAT SMARTS!!
"PERHAPS BEN GRIMM'S CRIES MERELY MASK THE INSECURITY BURIED DEEP BENEATH HIS SCALE-ARMORED HIDE...

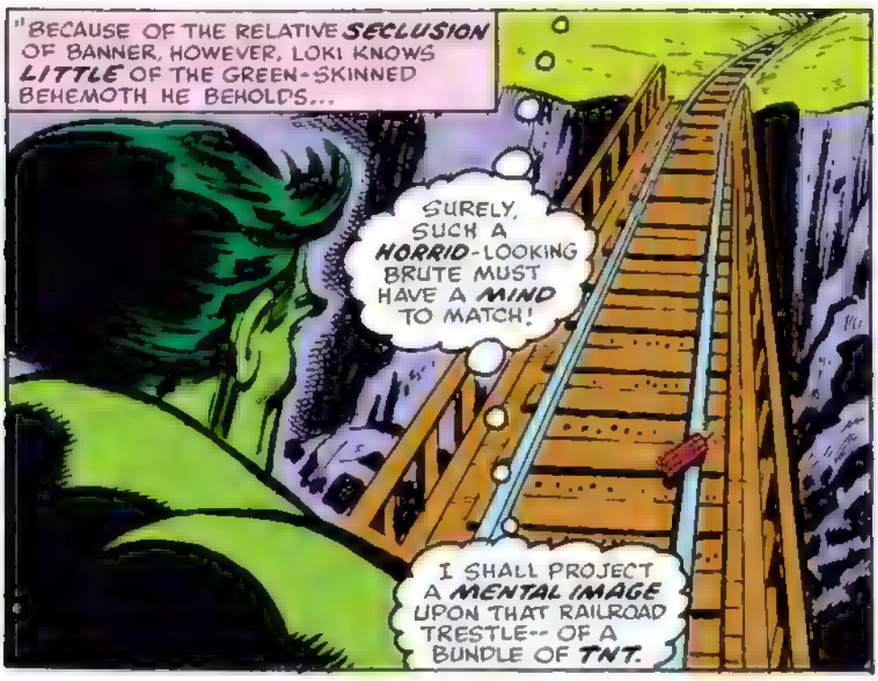

"STILL, WHEN THE ELECTRONICALLY-CHANNELED GAMMA RADIATION IS TURNED OFF...
I-- I FEEL DIFFERENT. BUT-- HOW DO I LOOK?
YOU'RE HUMAN AGAIN, BEN-- HUMAN!
YEAH?
IT'S WONDERFUL!

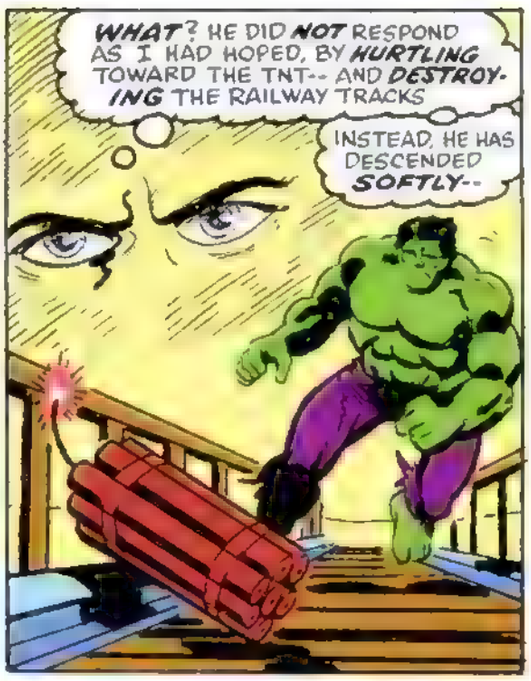

DOC-- I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME!
I THINK I'VE GOT A ROUGH IDEA.
HEY, STRETCH-- ANY CHANCE OF US HELPIN' THE DOC OUT THE SAME WAY?
I-- WISH THERE WERE, BEN.
MAYBE AFTER SOME MORE RESEARCH...!
"NOR DOES THIS END THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE HULK'S SOJOURN.

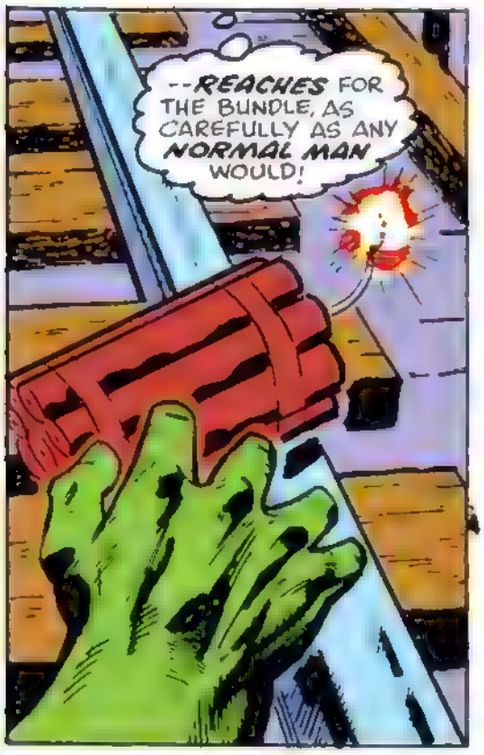

"AS, THAT VERY EVENING...
THEN-- IT'S REALLY HAPPENING!
THE F.F.'S BREAKING UP-- AND MAYBE IT'S JUST AS WELL.
SURE, REED! WITHOUT THE THING'S STRENGTH, WE MIGHT AS WELL ALL GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
C'MON, KID-- YOU KNOW IT'S BEST THAT YOU'RE GOIN' TA COLLEGE ANYWAY.
JUST BE HOME FOR ALICIA'S AND MY WEDDING, OKAY?
WOULDN'T MISS IT, PAL!

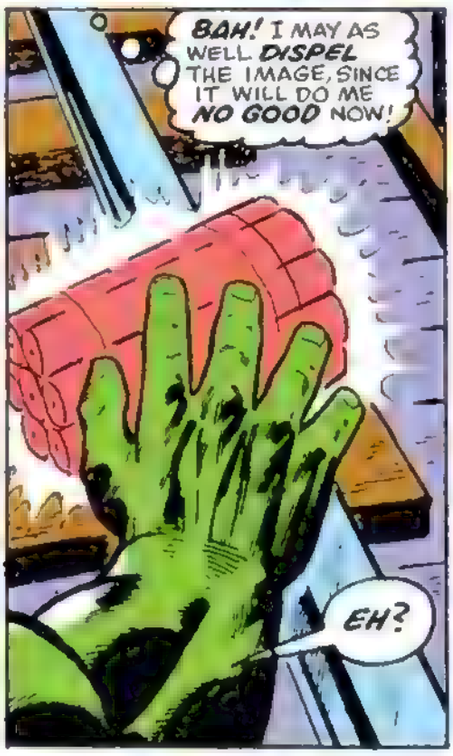
"THE NEXT NIGHT, THE MIGHTILY-LEAPING HULK HEADS BACK TOWARD THE SOUTHWEST DESERT..
IT'LL SURE BE GREAT TO SEE BETTY AGAIN-- AND TO RESUME MY OWN EXPERIMENTS.
WHO KNOWS? ONE OF THESE DAYS, MAYBE I WILL BE ABLE TO BANISH THE HULK FOREVER.
"LITTLE DOES HE SUSPECT, HOWEVER...

"...AND THAT HE IS BEING WATCHED BY LOKI, GOD OF EVIL, FROM HIS PLACE OF EXILE ON THE ASGARDIAN ISLE OF SILENCE...
I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE TO USE AGAINST MY NEMESIS, THOR.
AND, IN THAT CREATURE-- I HAVE SURELY FOUND HIM!

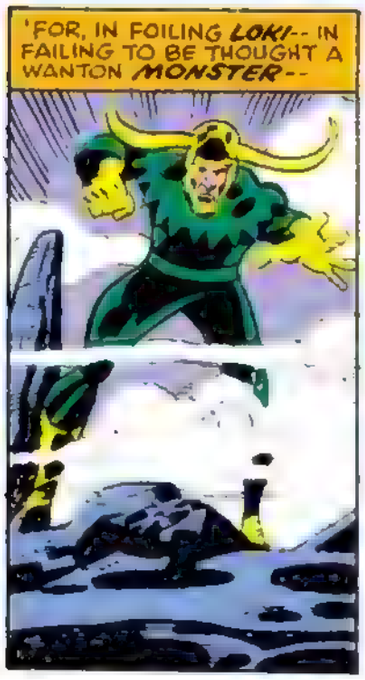

"BECAUSE OF THE RELATIVE SECLUSION OF BANNER, HOWEVER, LOKI KNOWS LITTLE OF THE GREEN-SKINNED BEHEMOTH HE BEHOLDS...
SURELY, SUCH A HORRID-LOOKING BRUTE MUST HAVE A MIND TO MATCH!
I SHALL PROJECT A MENTAL IMAGE UPON THAT RAILROAD TRESTLE-- OF A BUNDLE OF TNT.

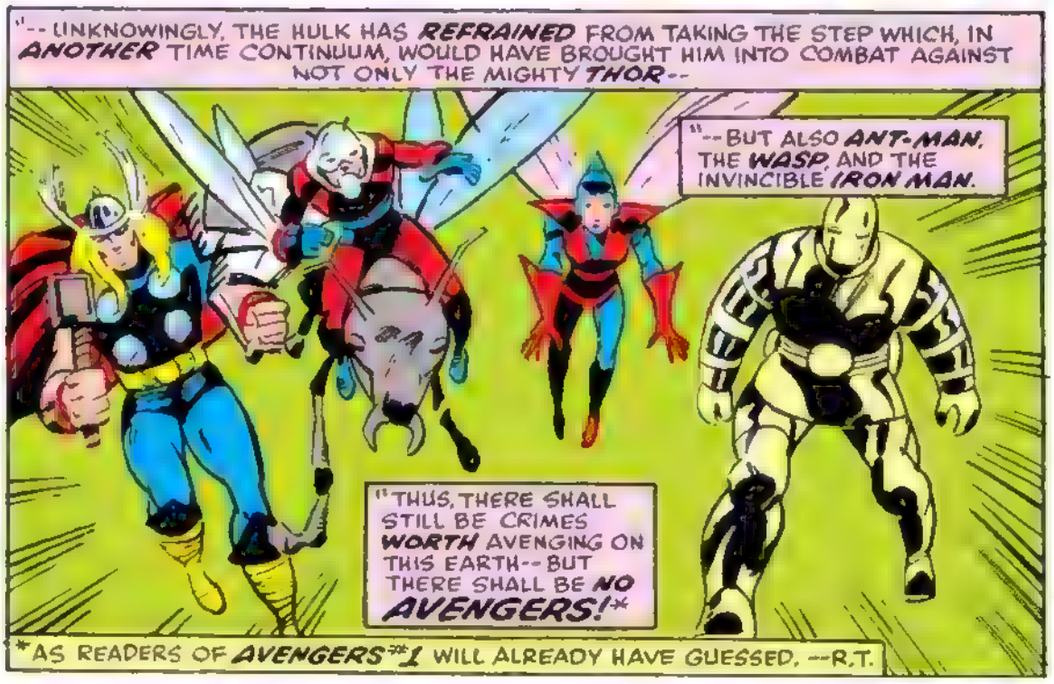

WHAT? HE DID NOT RESPOND AS I HAD HOPED, BY HURTLING TOWARD THE TNT-- AND DESTROYING THE RAILWAY TRACKS
INSTEAD, HE HAS DESCENDED SOFTLY--

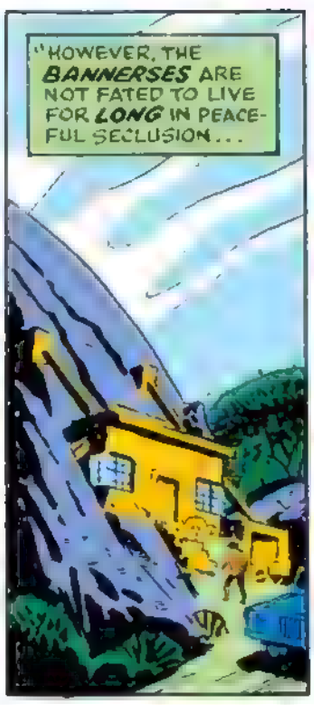

--REACHES FOR THE BUNDLE, AS CAREFULLY AS ANY NORMAL MAN WOULD!


BAH! I MAY AS WELL DISPEL THE IMAGE, SINCE IT WILL DO ME NO GOOD NOW!
EH?

SINCE A TRAIN IS DRAWING NEAR, THE HULK'S ACTION HAS SAVED MANY LIVES.
BUT, IT HAS DONE EVEN MORE THAN HE CAN SUSPECT...


'FOR, IN FOILING LOKI-- IN FAILING TO BE THOUGHT A WANTON MONSTER--


"-- UNKNOWINGLY, THE HULK HAS REFRAINED FROM TAKING THE STEP WHICH, IN ANOTHER TIME CONTINUUM, WOULD HAVE BROUGHT HIM INTO COMBAT AGAINST NOT ONLY THE MIGHTY THOR--
"-- BUT ALSO ANT-MAN, THE WASP, AND THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN.
"THUS, THERE SHALL STILL BE CRIMES WORTH AVENGING ON THIS EARTH-- BUT THERE SHALL BE NO AVENGERS!*
*AS READERS OF AVENGERS #1 WILL ALREADY HAVE GUESSED, --R.T.

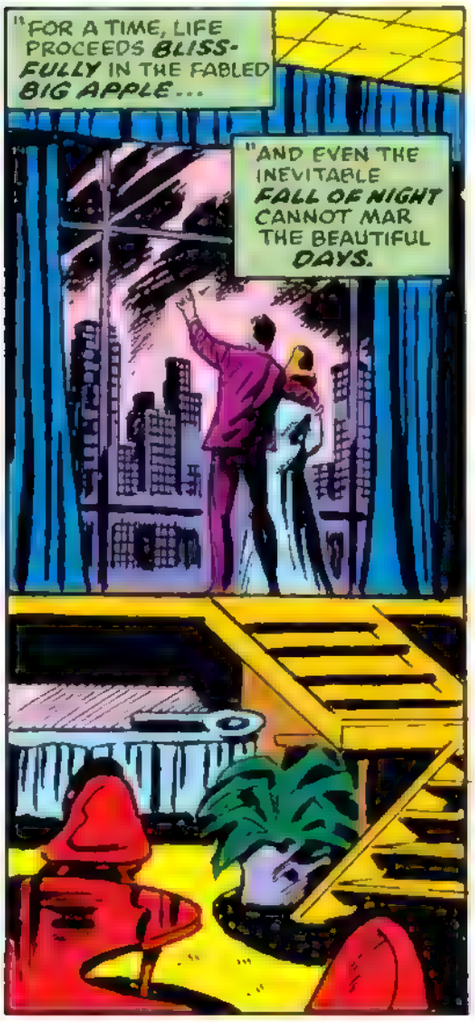

"HOWEVER, THE BANNERSES ARE NOT FATED TO LIVE FOR LONG IN PEACEFUL SECLUSION...

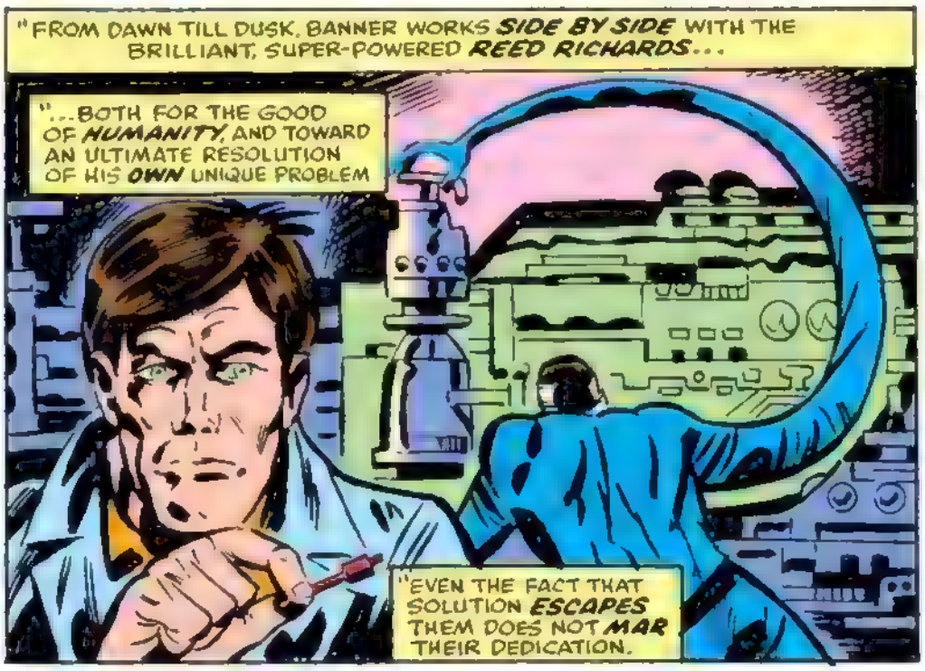
"FOR...
ANY GOOD NEWS IN THE TELEGRAM I BROUGHT, DR. BANNER?
I DON'T KNOW, ZEKE.
I JUST DON'T KNOW.

BETTY-- REED RICHARDS HAS ASKED ME TO MOVE PERMANENTLY TO NEW YORK, TO ENGAGE IN JOINT RESEARCH WITH HIM. I--
THAT'S MARVELOUS, BRUCE! THAT WAY-- PERHAPS SOME DAY YOU WON'T HAVE TO BECOME THE HULK ANY MORE!
HONEY-- YOU'RE A CHAMP!

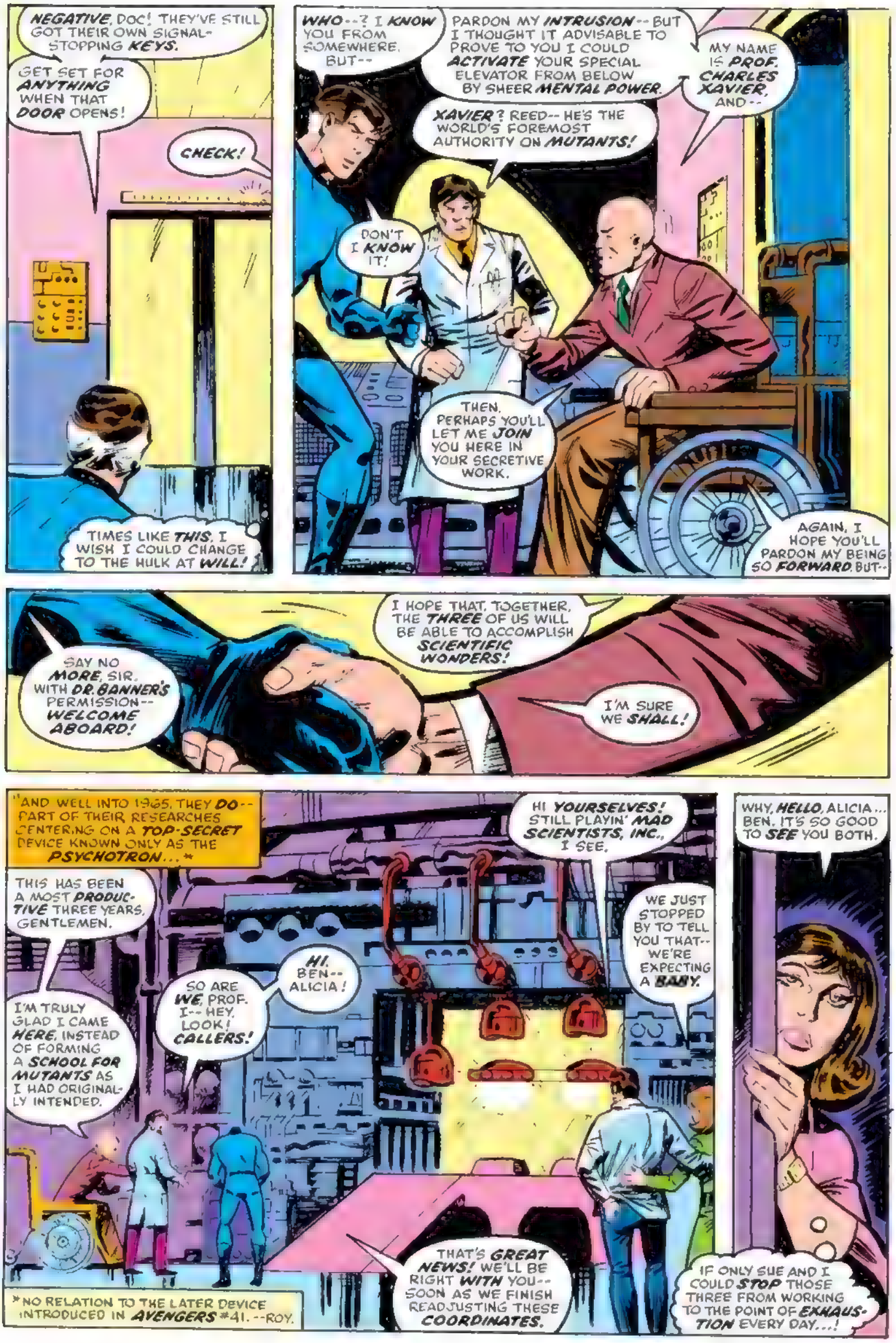
WITHIN DAYS, THE COUPLE ENDED THEIR SELF-IMPOSED EXILE...

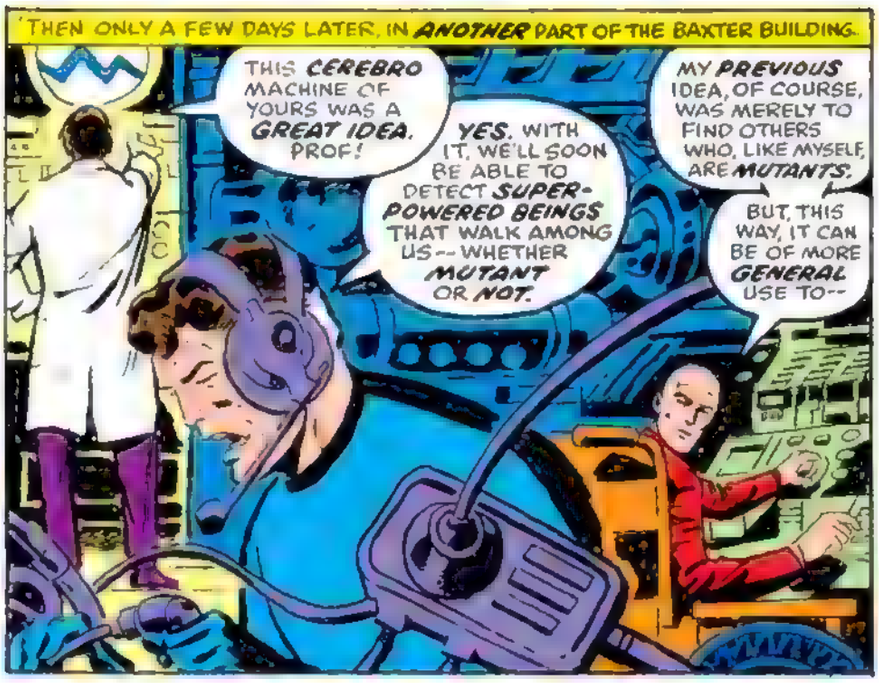
"...AND ARRIVED IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK CITY:
BRUCE-- BETTY! I'M DELIGHTED YOU DECIDED TO ACCEPT MY INVITATION TO LIVE AND WORK HERE IN THE BAXTER BUILDING!
SUE AND I GET LONELY, RATTLING AROUND HERE NOW THAT THE OTHERS HAVE GONE.
WE'LL STAY AS LONG AS YOU CAN STAND US, REED.
YOU'LL LOVE NEW YORK, BETTY.
BLOOMINGDALE'S GIVES A SPECIAL DISCOUNT TO SUPERHEROES' WIVES...!


"FOR A TIME, LIFE PROCEEDS BLISSFULLY IN THE FABLED BIG APPLE...
"AND EVEN THE INEVITABLE FALL OF NIGHT CANNOT MAR THE BEAUTIFUL DAYS.

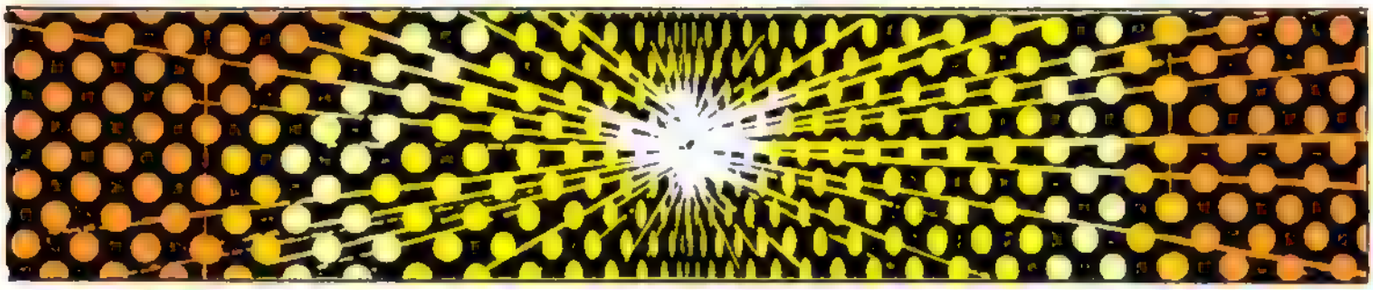

"FROM DAWN TILL DUSK, BANNER WORKS SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE BRILLIANT, SUPER-POWERED REED RICHARDS...
"...BOTH FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY, AND TOWARD AN ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF HIS OWN UNIQUE PROBLEM
"EVEN THE FACT THAT SOLUTION ESCAPES THEM DOES NOT MAR THEIR DEDICATION.

"THEN ONE DAY--
BLEEP BLEEP
UH OH! WE'VE GOT AN UNINVITED VISITOR!
WHO COULD IT BE, REED? BEN-- MAYBE JOHNNY?

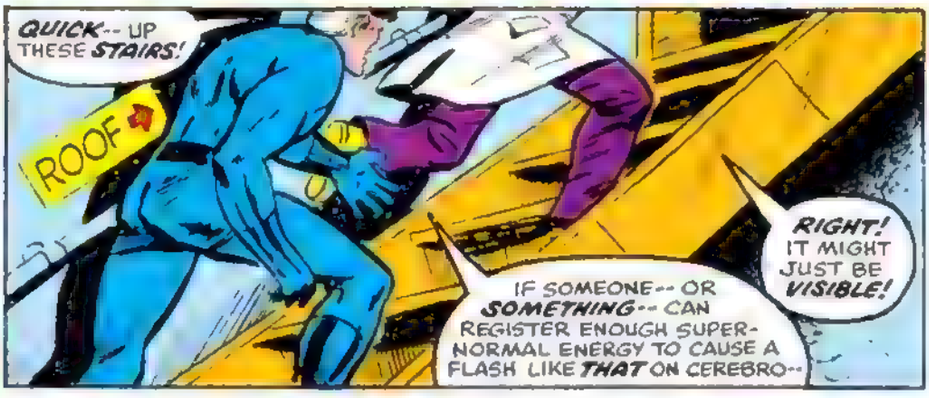

NEGATIVE, DOC! THEY'VE STILL GOT THEIR OWN SIGNAL-STOPPING KEYS.
GET SET FOR ANYTHING WHEN THAT DOOR OPENS!
CHECK!
TIMES LIKE THIS, I WISH I COULD CHANGE TO THE HULK AT WILL!
WHO--? I KNOW YOU FROM SOMEWHERE, BUT--
PARDON MY INTRUSION-- BUT I THOUGHT IT ADVISABLE TO PROVE TO YOU I COULD ACTIVATE YOUR SPECIAL ELEVATOR FROM BELOW BY SHEER MENTAL POWER.
MY NAME IS PROF. CHARLES XAVIER, AND--
XAVIER? REED-- HE'S THE WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON MUTANTS!
DON'T I KNOW IT!
THEN, PERHAPS YOU'LL LET ME JOIN YOU HERE IN YOUR SECRETIVE WORK.
AGAIN, I HOPE YOU'LL PARDON MY BEING SO FORWARD, BUT--
SAY NO MORE, SIR. WITH DR. BANNER'S PERMISSION-- WELCOME ABOARD!
I HOPE THAT, TOGETHER, THE THREE OF US WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SCIENTIFIC WONDERS!
I'M SURE WE SHALL!
"AND WELL INTO 1965, THEY DO-- PART OF THEIR RESEARCHES CENTERING ON A TOP-SECRET DEVICE KNOWN ONLY AS THE PSYCHOTRON...*
THIS HAS BEEN A MOST PRODUCTIVE THREE YEARS, GENTLEMEN.
I'M TRULY GLAD I CAME HERE, INSTEAD OF FORMING A SCHOOL FOR MUTANTS AS I HAD ORIGINALLY INTENDED.
SO ARE WE, PROF. I-- HEY, LOOK! CALLERS!
HI, BEN-- ALICIA!
HI YOURSELVES! STILL PLAYIN' MAD SCIENTISTS, INC., I SEE.
WE JUST STOPPED BY TO TELL YOU THAT-- WE'RE EXPECTING A BABY.
THAT'S GREAT NEWS! WE'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU-- SOON AS WE FINISH READJUSTING THESE COORDINATES.
*NO RELATION TO THE LATER DEVICE INTRODUCED IN AVENGERS #41. --ROY.
WHY, HELLO, ALICIA... BEN. IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU BOTH.
IF ONLY SUE AND I COULD STOP THOSE THREE FROM WORKING TO THE POINT OF EXHAUSTION EVERY DAY...!


THEN ONLY A FEW DAYS LATER, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BAXTER BUILDING.
THIS CEREBRO MACHINE OF YOURS WAS A GREAT IDEA, PROF!
YES, WITH IT, WE'LL SOON BE ABLE TO DETECT SUPER-POWERED BEINGS THAT WALK AMONG US-- WHETHER MUTANT OR NOT.
MY PREVIOUS IDEA, OF COURSE, WAS MERELY TO FIND OTHERS WHO, LIKE MYSELF, ARE MUTANTS.
BUT, THIS WAY, IT CAN BE OF MORE GENERAL USE TO--

BOTH OF YOU-- HOLD IT!!
SHUT CEREBRO OFF-- AND FAST!
WE'VE GOT A RUNAWAY OVERLOA--



HOLY HANNAH! WHAT WAS THAT? NOTHING SEEMS DAMAGED...
AN EXPLOSION-- YET, WITH ALL ITS ENERGY EXPENDED IN SHEER LIGHT--!
CEREBRO WAS SET TO REGISTER SUPERHUMAN POWER SOURCES IN THE VICINITY.
REED-- DO YOU SUPPOSE--?
OF COURSE! THAT'S GOT TO BE IT!


QUICK-- UP THESE STAIRS!
ROOF
IF SOMEONE-- OR SOMETHING-- CAN REGISTER ENOUGH SUPER-NORMAL ENERGY TO CAUSE A FLASH LIKE THAT ON CEREBRO--
RIGHT! IT MIGHT JUST BE VISIBLE!

BUT PERSONALLY, I HOPE IT TURNS OUT TO BE JUST A PROGRAMMING ERROR.
AFTER ALL, WHAT ON EARTH COULD POSSIBLY CAUSE A POWER OVERLOAD LIKE--?
GOOD LORD! THERE'S YOUR ANSWER, BRUCE!
IT WASN'T ANYTHING WE'VE EVER SEEN ON EARTH AT ALL.
IT WAS-- THAT!

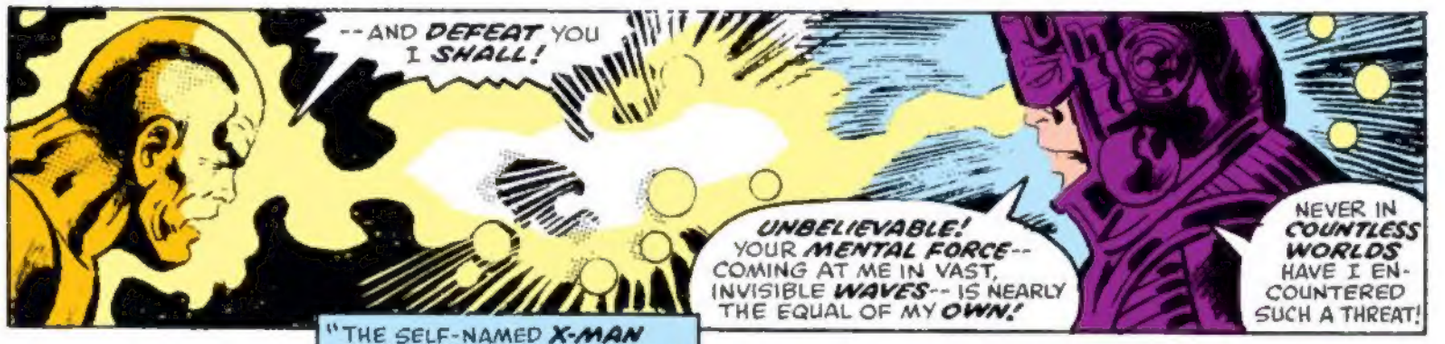
MY JOURNEY IS ENDED!
SO SPEAKS GALACTUS!
GALACTUS!? NEVER HEARD OF HIM-- BUT, THAT GIGANTIC VESSEL BEHIND HIM--
HE MUST BE FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
THIS PLANET SHALL SUSTAIN ME-- UNTIL IT HAS BEEN DRAINED OF ALL ELEMENTAL LIFE!
AND, THE WAY HE'S TALKING-- HE'S COME TO DESTROY THE EARTH!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM SOMEHOW-- NO MATTER HOW BIG HE IS.
REED-- MAYBE YOUR STRETCHING ABILITIES--!
I'LL-- GIVE IT A TRY--!

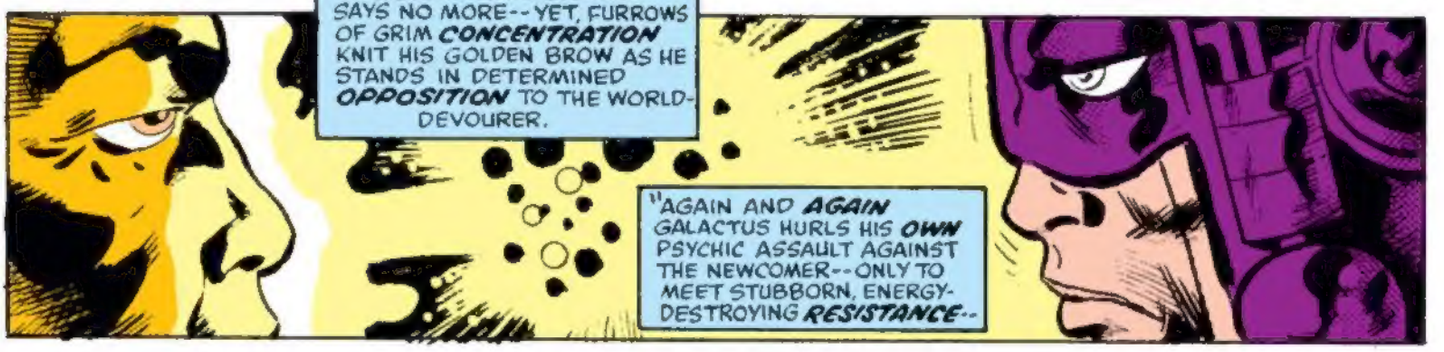
BAH! YOUR PUNY POWERS ARE AS NOTHING TO ONE WHO HAS FEASTED ON THE LATENT ENERGIES OF COUNTLESS STARS!
HE'S BOWLING US OVER-- LIKE TENPINS!
BUT HOW DID HE EVER FIND THE EARTH-- AMONG TRILLIONS OF PLANETS?

AYE, EARTHLING-- ONCE I NEEDED A SENTINEL TO FIND LIFE-SUSTAINING WORLDS FOR ME-- ONE CALLED THE SILVER SURFER.
BUT, I DID NOT NEED HIM TO FIND YOUR PLANET--
FOR, THE POWERFUL EMANATIONS OF YOUR OWN POWER-SEEKING APPARATUS GUIDED ME HERE!
YOU DOOMED YOUR OWN WORLD!

I'VE NO MORE TIME TO WASTE!
SMASH!
BEFORE I COMPLETELY FORGET MY HUMAN ORIGINS-- PERHAPS EVEN MY PRE-DESTINED MISSION
--I MUST GO, TO FIGHT THE ONE I WAS CREATED TO FIGHT--

GALACTUS!
THEN, THE PRIMITIVES OF THIS WORLD HAVE NOT GIVEN UP HOPE.
THE INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL STILL LIVES IN THEM.
AYE! I'VE LITTLE MORE IN COMMON WITH THE HUMANS OF EARTH THAN YOU DO--YET MY EVERY THOUGHT-IMPULSE TELLS ME I MUST STRIVE TO DEFEAT YOU--


--AND DEFEAT YOU I SHALL!
UNBELIEVABLE! YOUR MENTAL FORCE-- COMING AT ME IN VAST, INVISIBLE WAVES-- IS NEARLY THE EQUAL OF MY OWN!
NEVER IN COUNTLESS WORLDS HAVE I EN-COUNTERED SUCH A THREAT!


"THE SELF-NAMED X-MAN SAYS NO MORE--YET, FURROWS OF GRIM CONCENTRATION KNIT HIS GOLDEN BROW AS HE STANDS IN DETERMINED OPPOSITION TO THE WORLD-DEVOURER.
"AGAIN AND AGAIN GALACTUS HURLS HIS OWN PSYCHIC ASSAULT AGAINST THE NEWCOMER--ONLY TO MEET STUBBORN, ENERGY-DESTROYING RESISTANCE--

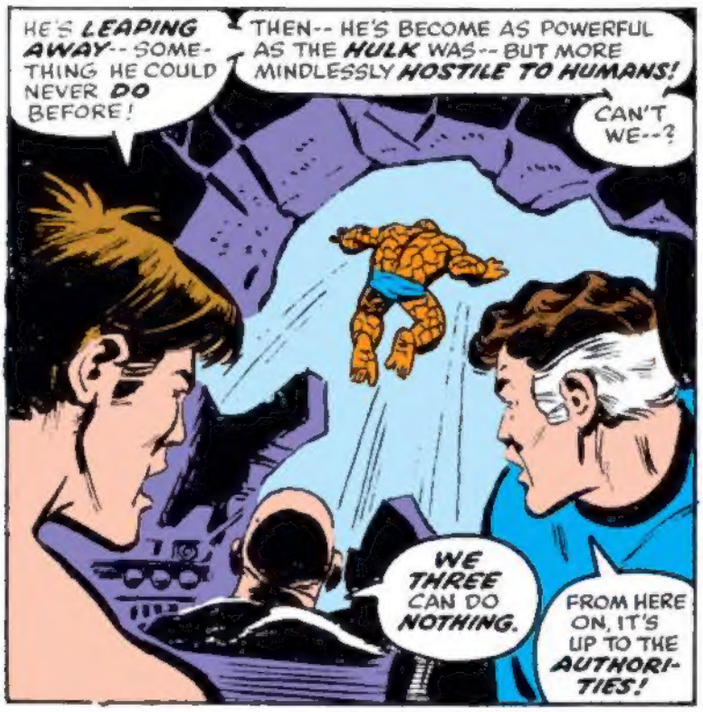
"--UNTIL, SUDDENLY--
NO! I CANNOT GO ON!
IT WOULD TAKE MONTHS-- PER-HAPS YEARS-- TO DEFEAT YOU THIS WAY!
AND BY THEN-- I WOULD HAVE DEPLETED MY ENERGY-- TO STAND AT THE MERCY OF THE PLANET'S INHABITANTS!

ON YOUR WORLD, GALACTUS WAS DEFEATED BY THE ULTIMATE NULLIFIER-- WHICH I, IN OATH-BREAKING CONCERN, PLACED IN THE HANDS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
YET NOW I KNOW-- AS I DID NOT THEN-- THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY!

"MOMENTS LATER, GALACTUS HAS RE-ENTERED HIS HUGE SHIP...
"...AND DEPARTED, IN SEARCH OF EASIER WORLDS TO CONQUER-- AND DEVOUR.

"AND IT IS, PERHAPS, FORTUNATE THAT HE DOES NOT LOOK BACK--
"--AS, WITHOUT WARNING, THE TRIUMPHANT X-MAN SUDDENLY SEEMS TO TOPPLE, LIKE A LIFELESS, STRICKEN TREE--
UNNH
"--FIRST TO GLOW EVEN MORE BRIGHTLY, THEN ABRUPTLY TO FADE, LIKE A FIRE WHICH HAS TOTALLY BURNED UP ITS ENERGY SOURCE!
"WITHIN AN EARTHIAN MINUTE, THERE IS NO X-MAN ATOP A GOTHAM SKYSCRAPER...
"...BUT ONLY THREE DECIDEDLY MORTAL CHAMPIONS!
NOT SURE--JUST WHAT HAPPENED--BUT WE WON!
DID WE? I--MOSTLY REMEMBER THE EXPLOSION--THEN THE FEELING I WAS DREAMING I WAS SOMEONE ELSE--!
THAT WAS NO DREAM, DR. BANNER!
THE PSYCHOTRON ALLOWED US TO COMBINE OUR FORMIDABLE INTELLECTS PHYSICALLY FOR A TIME--BUT, I FEAR, AT A PRICE.
TELL ME--CAN YOU TWO STILL USE YOUR OTHER POWERS?
CERTAINLY! IF I CHANGED TO THE HULK IN DAYLIGHT BEFORE, SURELY I CAN--
NO! YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN'T--
I FEEL DIFFERENT SOMEHOW--AS IF I'LL NEVER BECOME THE HULK AGAIN!
AT LEAST YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED THAT, BRUCE--BUT LOOK!
MY STRETCHING POWER IS GONE, TOO!
IT'S AS IF OUR SUPER-POWERS, CAUSED BY GAMMA RAYS AND COSMIC RAYS, WERE ALL DISSIPATED IN THE CREATION OF THE X-MAN... AND THE BATTLE WITH GALACTUS!
AS WAS MY OWN INBORN MUTANT MIND, DR. RICHARDS!
ONCE I COULD READ MINDS--SEND ASTRAL PROJECTIONS--AND NOW, SUDDENLY, I CANNOT!
THEN--WE MAY HAVE DEFEATED GALACTUS--AT THE COST OF OUR OWN SUPER-POWERS!

"A FACT AMAZING ENOUGH IN ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MANKIND! YET, MEANWHILE, WITHIN THE BAXTER BUILDING...
PLEASE-- TELL ME! IS BEN ALL RIGHT??
WE--CAN'T BE SURE YET, ALICIA.
HE WAS BURIED BY THAT BLAST-- AND WE HAVEN'T--
SUE-- WAIT! LOOK!
I SEE, BETTY!
THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING UNDER ALL THE RUBBLE-- SOMETHING LIVING--!
BUT PLEASE--I'VE GOT TO KNOW-- IS IT BEN??
"AND THEN, AS TWISTED MACHINERY IS SLOUGHED ASIDE LIKE CARDBOARD, SUE RICHARDS AND BETTY BANNER DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO ALICIA GRIMM...
"IS HER HUSBAND ALIVE-- OR ISN'T HE?
"JUST THEN--
WELL, AT LEAST WE CAN CONTINUE OUR RESEARCH-- NOW, WITHOUT BEING DISTRACTED BY OUR FORMER POWERS.
BUT WHAT ABOUT BEN? THE X-MAN'S BLOW MAY HAVE-- OH NO!
THAT'S OKAY WITH ME, PROF--
WHAT IN BLAZES--?
WELL? WHAT'RE YOU LOSERS STARIN' AT?
IT'S BEN-- ALIVE! BUT THE X-MAN'S EMANATIONS MUST HAVE CAUSED HIM TO REVERT BACK TO BEING THE THING!
YOU KNOW IT, BIG BRAIN! AND I CAN ALREADY TELL I'M A WHOLE LOT STRONGER THAN I WAS BEFORE--
--STRONG ENUFF THAT NOBODY'S EVER GONNA BOSS ME AROUND AGAIN WITH ALL THAT DO-GOODER JAZZ!
NOBODY!
THIS IS HORRIBLE! THIS SECOND TRANSFORMATION HAS AFFECTED BEN GRIMM'S BRAIN AS WELL AS HIS PHYSIQUE.
HE'S BECOME A BRUTISH MONSTER!
MR. GRIMM-- PERHAPS WE CAN STILL CURE YOU--!



NEXT ISSUE: A NEW AND WONDROUS ***ORIGIN*** FOR-- ***THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!***